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FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES.

HISTORICAL REVIEW,

BY THE

COUNT ADOLPHE DE CIRCOURT,

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

REPRINTED FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY.



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FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES.

AT a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, held Oct. 12, 1876, the President (Hon. ROBERT C. WINTHROP) communicated an English translation of the “Conclusions Historiques,” which our Foreign Honorary Member, Count Adolphe de Circourt, had appended to the second volume of the “Histoire de l’Action Commune de la France et de l’Amérique pour l’Indépendance des États-Unis, par George Bancroft.”

In offering this communication, the President said that it was well remembered by us all that the last volume of Mr. Bancroft’s elaborate “History of the United States” dealt largely and minutely with the alliance between France and the United States in 1778, under a treaty in the negotiation of which our own Franklin had played so distinguished a part, and which had always been so prominently associated with the ultimate success of our struggle for Independence. That volume had naturally attracted attention in France; and M. de Circourt, with the concurrence of his friend, Mr. Bancroft, had translated it into the French language, and had published it as an independent work, in three volumes, under the title which has been given. The French translation was accompanied by notes, and by a large mass of hitherto unpublished original documents, which had been kindly furnished by Mr. Bancroft for the purpose. But, in addition to the annotations and the documents, M. de Circourt had incorporated into the second volume a Paper of his own, under the title of “Conclusions Historiques,” giving a summary sketch of the history of the rise and progress of

American Independence, from his own point of view. This Paper, which occupied nearly a hundred pages of the second volume of the French publication, had been thought worthy of special notice in France. M. Ch. Giraud, an eminent jurisconsult and distinguished Academician, in presenting a copy of the three volumes to the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, after paying a just tribute to the historical labors of Mr. Bancroft, a Corresponding Member of the Academy, spoke of M. de Cireourt's "Conclusions Historiques" as a very important contribution, worthy to be commended to the public attention. And I have seen (continued the President) a letter of our senior Honorary Member, M. Mignet, the brilliant French historian, in which, after speaking of Mr. Bancroft's volume, and of the precious documents, hitherto unpublished, by which it is enriched, he goes on to characterize the "Conclusions" as broad, wise, deep,—a philosophical *r  sum  * of the memorable American Revolution; a skilful review of the causes which led to it, and of the events which marked its progress; an elevated judgment of the position and spirit of the men most distinguished in it, and a clear indication of the consequences which were to follow it,—"a true picture, in short, drawn by a firm hand."

It was thought by many of us—and I am glad to say that Mr. Bancroft cordially concurred in the opinion—that such a contribution to the history of our country, from such a source, should not be suffered to remain unrecognized in our own land, and that its publication in the English language, under the auspices of a Society of which M. de Circourt is an Honorary Member, and whose name he has associated with his own on the title-page of his volumes, would be only an act of justice at once to him, to ourselves, and to history. M. de Circourt acquiesced in our desire as soon as it was communicated to him, and prepared a brief "Avant-Propos," or Prefatory Note, as an explanation of his Paper.

The President said that he would only add, that the translation had been kindly prepared, as a labor of love for the Society, by an accomplished lady, who had positively for-

bidden the mention of her name, and to whom we could thus only return what might be called, in an unusual sense, an anonymous acknowledgment. That acknowledgment, however, would not be the less grateful and cordial on that account, and he should feel himself charged by the Society to present its best thanks to the translator for her obliging labors in our behalf. He would now commit the Paper, with the leave of the Society, to the Committee on the publication of our Proceedings, who would pass judgment on its appropriateness for our volumes.

The Committee on the Proceedings having voted to give the paper of M. de Circourt a place in their publications, it is accordingly here printed.

CHARLES DEANE,
Recording Secretary.

HISTORICAL CONCLUSIONS OR REVIEW,

BY THE

COUNT ADOLPHE DE CIRCOURT.

PREFACE.

THE tenth volume of the "History of the United States," by the Hon. George Bancroft, contains the story of events in America from the formation of the alliance with the French Crown to the peace of Versailles,—from 1778 to 1783.

In 1876 there was published at Paris, by Vieweg, a work entitled "Histoire de l'Alliance et de l'Action Commune de la France et de l'Amérique pour l'Indépendance des États-Unis."* The first part of this work contains a translation, by M. de Circourt, of Mr. Bancroft's tenth volume, which is a distinct and special portion of his great work. The second part comprises an original essay by M. de Circourt, with the title "Conclusions Historiques," and various unpublished diplomatic documents, generously placed at the disposal of the French translator and publisher by Mr. Bancroft. To these documents the work owes an interest that cannot be exaggerated. Drawn as they are from most authentic sources, and almost all hitherto unknown to the student of history, they throw a clear light on many negotiations whose consequences have become a part of the annals of the period the most fertile in revolutions and the most productive of new creations. Here we find the key to more than one event of great importance, hitherto an enigma; here we see the hidden spring of more than one decisive resolution. In particular, we find the views, opinions, and judgments of Frederick the Great on the events taking place in Europe and America, during the war for Independence, painted here in clear, strong colors, which contribute not a little to the understanding of that penetrating and powerful character, in turn inspired by ambition, enlightened by humanity, and swayed by policy.

It has been thought that these "Conclusions Historiques," although they have, and can rightly have, a place only in the French work, may yet possess enough interest for the American public to warrant their translation into English. Their author has willingly yielded to the suggestion; but he feels it an absolute duty to warn those American friends who may kindly read his essay, that its insufficiency will be manifest, unless it be read in connection with the work of Mr. Bancroft, and verified by the documents with which he has enriched the French edition.

* 3 vols. 8vo, Paris, 1876. Vieweg, publisher, 69 Rue de Richelieu.

It is almost superfluous to remark on the coincidence of this publication with the Centennial Jubilee of the independence of the United States, which is opening the source of so many grave reflections for Europe! The experience of a whole century enables us to-day to form a clearer and sounder judgment of the policy of the cabinet of Versailles under the good and unfortunate Louis XVI.; of that of the cabinet of Madrid under a king who loved the good of his subjects, but the views of whose minister were narrow; of that of the cabinet of St. James under an obstinate monarch, tossed by parliamentary struggles between two systems,—one trying to prolong the Past, the other to adapt itself to the will of the Future. Finally and especially, the grand lesson of all these glorious but painful experiences, of increasing prosperity and immense dangers, of passionate debates and hasty conclusions, only brings out more clearly the excellence of the character of Washington and his immortal coadjutors in the task which they succeeded in accomplishing at the end of fifteen years of struggle, of war, of effort, and agitation,—the task of conciliating respect for acquired rights with the interest of possible perfection; the preservation of ancient institutions consecrated by Justice with the exigencies of a new age; the solidity of the foundations of the political edifice with the grandeur of the buildings to be erected upon them; in a word, the passionate pursuit of Liberty with a submissive adoration of the great Author of all things, from whom all good comes, and to whom all good should be ascribed.

JUNE, 1876.

THE establishment of an independent nation in America, the part taken by France in the revolution from which it sprang, the constitution adopted by the new nation, and the principles on which it was founded from the beginning, make the year 1776 one of the most important of the eighteenth century down to 1789, and one of the greatest in the history of the human race.

Every event of that mighty revolution, understood only partially by its contemporaries, but revealing its full significance to our own time, should be studied both by itself and in its results.

Conquered and colonized by European nations, America, for nearly three centuries, had been considered both in theory and in practice the property of the Old World, destined to receive her surplus population, to be governed by the laws and to follow the fortunes of the European States which, enriched by her productions, divided and contended for her government.

The Greek colonies, when firmly established, became, as a rule, independent of the mother-country. The Romans, predestined to give to the Old World a higher civilization, pursued a different course. Rome held her colonies in strict subjection, gradually making a world of that which at first was only a city.*

* “Orbem fecisti quod prius urbs erat.”

When America received civil and religious laws from the European nations, the latter had followed unhesitatingly the example of Rome, whose maxims still had paramount authority with modern, especially with western, nations. First Spain, which reluctantly, and only after futile struggles, gave up her claim to the exclusive possession of the Western Hemisphere, then Portugal, Holland, France, and England herself, pursued the same method in the colonies which they founded, and the territory they acquired beyond the ocean. But the English, who came to the Atlantic coast of America later than their rivals, were led by peculiar circumstances to establish colonies under special conditions which the English government could not at first fully comprehend, but of which the colonists themselves had from the beginning a full and clear understanding.

The colonists of New England and Virginia belonged to a free race, organized for the development of liberty under a monarchy. These two principal colonies were separated by New Netherlands, belonging to the Dutch, until the treaty of Breda,* by which the States-General ceded to England all that region which afterwards became New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. New Sweden, previously conquered by Holland, was comprised in this cession, and formed the province of Delaware. Under Charles II., James II., William III., and George I., the "Old Dominion,"† martial and fruitful Virginia, extended on the south to the magnificent colonies of the Carolinas and Georgia.

The whole territory between the Alleghanies and the Atlantic, with a temperate climate and varied productions, was, by successive grants from the time of Elizabeth ‡ to that of George I., given to companies of *gentlemen* belonging to the class of English land-owners and capitalists.

These *cavaliers*, as they liked to be called, guarded jealously in their new home their pride in the principles of civil liberty, and their firm resolution to enjoy in their adopted country their English privileges; voluntarily subjected to law; paying only those taxes which they themselves levied; loyal in the main, but attached to the institution of royalty rather than to the person of the sovereign acknowledged by Great Britain, who reigned, it might be by right of birth, it might be by the force of revolution.

Very different were the original settlers of New England. This country, which persistent and skilled labor has made one of the richest regions in the New World, was, in the first half of the seventeenth century, a land of forests and swamps, with a barren soil, severe climate, and occupied by tribes who rebelled to the very end against European civilization, even after their old superstitions had yielded to the light of the gospel. On these shores, where subsistence must be gained by hard labor, the *pilgrims* landed. They belonged to Presbyterian congregations, over-jealous for the purity of their faith, and avoiding union even with other Protestants less severe in their views. These voluntary exiles had been loyal subjects in England, but they had the spirit

* 1667.

† 1680 to 1720.

‡ 1580 to 1730.

of republicanism, and they interpreted in favor of a democratic government the words of the Holy Spirit which they sought in both the Old and New Testaments. The royal power did not regret their departure from England, and they obtained without difficulty charters granting them popular institutions, in the broadest meaning of that term. But, in their relations with the mother-country, they continued subject to the regulations made by the English parliament for the commerce and navigation of the plantations or colonies. The New England provinces, originally six in number, but soon reduced to four,* became, with the full consent of the crown, true republics, where there was neither distinction of class nor hereditary rank; states governed according to the Bible and the elements of *common law*, placed under the protection of the English king and parliament, but free from taxation, and subject only to the commercial restrictions fixed by the mother-country. These provinces became the seat of a serious, generous people, enterprising, not too ambitious, governed by conscience, and possessing in a remarkable degree the character and virtues which the prophetic genius of Shakspeare assigned to the English race, when he foretold that her king should "make new nations." †

During the reign of two sovereigns, extremely jealous for their rights, England, still half-feudal and intensely monarchical, gave birth to societies which became the most prosperous and influential representatives in the Christian world of methods the direct opposite of those to which the mother-country still adhered. In the beginning, James I. and his son saw, in the colonization of New England, only a peaceful means of getting the suspected and embarrassing Puritans well out of the way. Charles I., when the differences between the parliament and the crown had become alarmingly bitter and continuous, felt some anxiety about these independent Puritan communities, growing so steadily on the other side of the ocean: by fits and starts, he forbade the emigration of especially dangerous persons, but there was no method in his action, and his charters equalled or surpassed in liberality that which his father had given in 1620 to the Plymouth pilgrims.

In the course of time, Western Europe contributed of its best to both the important elements of British colonization in America. While the Huguenots, banished from France, carried to the English colonies industrious habits, rigid morality, and religious enthusiasm, the mild, laborious, and charitable Society of Friends ‡ founded, under William Penn, the flourishing city of Philadelphia, whose very name sums up the doctrine of the New Alliance; and Maryland, on the banks of the Potomac, was originally an open harbor of refuge for the English Catholics, who, by consent of the crown, were permitted in their new homes the exercise of political rights denied them in their native land.

* By the union of Plymouth, Boston, and Maine. The other three were Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

† Henry VIII., Act 5, Scene 4. This wonderful scene was written, at the latest in 1613, and possibly ten years earlier.

‡ A common name for Quakers, for which there is no explanation.

English America grew by combat. The generations who built up her power knew nothing of the lethargy which comes from the security of peace. All along the inland frontier, which was constantly pressed backward by cultivation and population, brave and obstinate tribes of Algonquin, Wyandot, Cherokee, and Mobile Indians, persistently fought the pioneers from the provinces. In South Carolina and Georgia, England had to conquer the claims rather than the arms of Spain; but to the north and west of the maritime region, to which until the middle of the eighteenth century English civilization had the wisdom to confine itself, a rival power arose and for a long time disputed the empire of the continent. In the New World, as in the Old, it was France who contested the superiority of England, and more than once threatened the very existence of the English colonies.

One cannot imagine a greater contrast than that which history shows between the principles and results of the systems followed by the two nations in the treatment of their North American dependencies. The English colonies were essentially Protestant, those of France were exclusively Catholic. The former were, from the first, political autonomies, on the model of a parliamentary constitution; the latter were creations of the crown, not emanations from the people; they were, to the last, subject at every point to the laws, the courts, the administrative guardianship of the mother-country, who sent them their magistrates, regulated every detail of their civil life, and, by means of monopolies, dwarfed their commerce and destroyed their industries. Again, while English colonization, clinging at first to the sea-board, developed gradually, keeping its compactness, and occupying only territory that it could people, the French, carried away by a passion for discovery, and by an impetuous temper that the rigor of government irritated instead of restraining, seemed to devour space, penetrating into the depths of the forests, and planting their flag on chosen sites along the great lakes and the tributaries of the "Father of Waters."* But, incapable of holding what their impulsive ambition had grasped, they were forced, after a glorious struggle, to yield to the better organization, the method, and the steady perseverance of their enemies. Little by little, the whole colonial empire, of which Louis XIV. had conceived the gigantic plan, fell under British rule; the peace of Ryswick stipulated for the abandonment of the northern settlements;† that of Utrecht ‡ for the cession of Newfoundland and Acadia; that of Aix-la-Chapelle § for the cession of Louisburg; at last the treaty of Versailles, signed in 1763, giving Canada to the English and Louisiana to the Spaniards, forced France to withdraw her lilies from that continent, to which she had nourished the proud hope of giving the name of the empire of the Bourbons.||

As the Floridas fell to Great Britain by the peace of 1763, she had no foreign rival on the northern continent of the New World; but

* Indian name for the Mississippi.

† The Hudson Bay posts, 1697.

|| Nonville France, Louisiane

‡ 1713.

§ 1748.

dangers, which she had until then hardly foreseen, and the gravity of which she for a long time did not comprehend, threatened her from the heart of her oldest and dearest colonies.

The immense transatlantic empire of England was formed by adding new conquests to old possessions, and had no unity. On the north were Canada, Nova Scotia, and the islands which are their natural dependencies; in the south, the Floridas; between these, the thirteen colonies, governed according to charters granted by England, and settled by born or naturalized Englishmen; finally, in the west, there was a vast, almost unexplored territory, divided by the Ohio River, into two nearly equal portions, occupied chiefly by Indians, but where French colonists had already begun settlements. The conquest and possession of these was considered one of the greatest advantages which England gained from the Seven Years' War.*

Wherever European culture had been introduced by France and Spain, even in those provinces where conquest had changed the nationality of the inhabitants (as was the case in the peninsula of Acadia), Great Britain found obedient subjects, and could establish, without opposition, laws favorable to English power and English commerce. Those possessions that, with the exception of Florida, Great Britain still holds, were, at the time of their cession, very thinly populated. In 1713, Acadia had only 20,000 souls; in 1760, all Canada had but 60,000. If we add 40,000 for the islands and for Florida, from 1713 to 1758, we have only 100,000 Europeans in those countries, which under the rule, or, more accurately speaking, under the protection of Great Britain, have seen their population increase, in a single century, to 3,860,000.†

But, if England could act freely, and with perfect safety, in the countries which she had conquered, her position was wholly different in the colonies, which were her children, whose fortunes had been one with hers from their foundation.

The misunderstanding between the mother-country and the colonies dates back to the reign of James II.; but for several generations the tendencies toward separation, and the strong wish for independence, had been held in check by the feeling of a common danger to be repulsed, of a common overpowering interest to be made victorious.

While the duel between France and Great Britain lasted on the continent, the sovereigns of the Houses of Stuart, Orange, and Brunswick, found in the provinces only *Englishmen*, ready to sacrifice every thing for the defence of their country, and the conquest of the French posts, which were near enough to be troublesome. When this war, which had lasted almost through the century,‡ ended, the thirteen provinces were already organized as States, and busy with their own

* 1756 to 1763 for Europe and the East Indies. In America the war began in 1754, and virtually ended at the close of 1760.

† Census of 1871-2.

‡ War broke out between France and England in 1624, but was soon ended. It was renewed with violence in 1689; but it had continued in the hearts of the colonists of both nations, even while their governments were at peace.

civil affairs, while the mother-country continued to treat them as colonies.

The thirteen provinces contained at that time 2,200,000 inhabitants, not counting the small number of native Indians. The negroes, whom a fatal speculation had introduced upon the Southern plantations, and scattered to some extent through the Northern States, were not one-sixth of this number. This great population, with a vast extent of fertile land was no longer a mere *colony*: It was a *nation*! It could no longer be a dependency: it was an empire. These truths, or rather these ideas, had taken root in the Anglo-American mind, which general education had prepared for the boldest thought; but the mother-country understood very differently the relations which her colonies should hold to her. She claimed sovereignty over the nation created by her care.

On this point, no especial blame attaches to the crown and the parliament of Great Britain. The principles which they declared and maintained were at the foundation of public law in every nation of Europe; while in the application of those principles to her American colonies Great Britain, with generous inconsistency, was far more lenient than Portugal, France, Holland herself, and especially than Spain. But this partial authority, confined to a few points, and with rare exceptions* enforced with marked discretion, was more than the colonists were willing to bear. English, for the most part, by race; English in language and manners,—they would not yield one of the political privileges enjoyed by their countrymen at home. It seemed unjust to them, and it irritated them that the British Parliament insisted upon absolute authority over the acts of the provincial assemblies which regulated taxes and the internal administration. They recognized the right of taxation only by legally elected representatives, and they had no representation in parliament. As to foreign countries, the Americans did not dispute the right of the king of Great Britain "to declare war, to conclude peace, to make treaties of commerce and friendship." They also submitted to the navigation laws between American and foreign ports; but they claimed free communication, by land and sea, with all parts of that British Empire (whether in Europe or out of it), of which they were subjects!† They wished also perfectly free trade between the provinces, and the right of manufacturing their own productions as well as those of Great Britain. Finally, it was of great importance to them to preserve the right of building and selling merchant-vessels, and of sharing, in the American fisheries, all the advantages guaranteed to British subjects by the law of nations, and by special treaties. These claims naturally seemed unreasonable to the lawyers and statesmen of monarchical Europe. The freedom, always bold,

* Arbitrary and violent acts in the government of the provinces were confined in Virginia to the Protectorate of Cromwell, and in New England to the latter years of Charles II., and to the dark reign of James II.

† *Regnicole* is the French equivalent of the English word subject, in its technical meaning.

sometimes insolent, with which American organs vindicated them, in the face of the King and his ministers, prejudiced and to a certain degree irritated Parliament and the ruling classes in England. Nevertheless, as these claims had for foundation clauses in numerous laws, and, still more, the general spirit of the English Constitution, equity required that they should be attended to; prudence gave the same counsel, and, if it had been heeded, the destinies of the world would have been changed. But wounded pride and mistaken interest closed the ears and the hearts of English rulers against American complaints, up to the year 1782. It seems to us that an impartial study of this important and difficult question will lead to the conclusion that absolute right was on the side of the Americans, but that the conduct of the English Government and people deserves great indulgence. We speak, of course, of the causes of the war itself, not of its conduct by either side. We may well be astonished, however, at one of those contradictions so frequent in the political life of nations, and in which the tragic becomes ridiculous. As soon as the attention of Europe was drawn to the dispute between Great Britain and her colonies, the most earnest protests, the most pathetic pleas against the "criminal injustice and egotism" of the English nation, and, above all, of her government, were made by the two nations who had imposed and, continued to maintain in their transatlantic possessions the most despotic yoke, the most ingeniously oppressive system of rules, that can be imagined. Neither France nor Spain ever thought seriously of giving to their transatlantic settlements the smallest fraction of that freedom which, in good faith, doubtless, and with generous enthusiasm, they demanded, even with arms, for the English colonies, as the "prescriptive right of civilized nations." Americans, resting on the positive law of their country, and the common law of their native land, had better justification for the war which resulted in their independence.

Whilst every thing favored the growth of the colonies, the boundless resources of their soil, the uprightness of their lives, the wisdom of their provincial institutions, at least in comparison with others, the mother-country saw her means for controlling her American colonies lessen year by year. The provinces had never done any thing toward the maintenance of a standing army. The militia was, in time of peace, reduced to the garrisons of forts on the Indian frontier. The strength of this military organization had been shown in the French war; but, having at this time no foreign enemy, it existed merely as a barrier against royal pretensions, as a menace to the royal governors sent from beyond the sea. These had authority, which they frequently used, to dissolve the provincial assemblies; but they gained no real advantage from it, for the new elections gave constantly increasing majorities to the patriots and the sons of liberty, as the advocates of the absolute independence of the provinces called themselves. The Americans, on their side, could refuse to pay the salaries of the royal officers; and, undignified as this method was, it became the custom of the democratic legislators of the North. Great Britain garrisoned the castle in Boston, and other old forts which commanded the entrance to rivers or harbors; but

she kept only a small army, and parliament would not grant the money necessary to hold the colonies in check. It was the same with the squadrons cruising off the coast, of which all the expense was borne by the royal treasury. The mother-country would not submit, in time of peace, to expenditures of which, as she thought, America had all the benefit; whilst the colonies insisted that they were wholly in the interest of the royal prerogative, and absolutely refused to have any thing to do with them.

It was this question, apparently purely financial, but really involving the foundations of political order, which brought about the bitter dispute, in the reign of George III., between the provinces and the mother-country, — a dispute which could be settled only by arms, and which finally resulted in the war of which the later events are given in the work we have now offered to the public.

Parliament, alleging that the defence of the Colonies imposed very heavy burdens on the mother-country, and that the provinces, as part of the empire, should themselves contribute their fair share of the common expense, thought it right to impose a few taxes for the benefit of the royal treasury. They were laid on tea imported from China, then in general use; on glass and colors, and on written legal or financial transactions, for which stamped paper must be used, manufactured in England, and sold to the provinces by the exchequer. Taxes so light have seldom been imposed on a people living in almost universal comfort; but the colonies considered them despotic exactions, because they were levied by a parliament in which the American provinces had no representation. The fundamental principle of English constitutional liberty was directly attacked by this measure, so the provincial assemblies, without exception, protested against its execution, and encouraged the people to resistance. The objects on which these taxes were levied were in daily use, and the rejection of stamped paper would have put a stop to business, if private persons and public officers had not acted in direct violation of the *order in council*.

Resistance, at first passive and quiet, soon became turbulent and seditions. In even the most enlightened and religious communities, there are lees which it is dangerous to stir up, and which agitation among the better classes brings to the surface suddenly and fatally. Boston was then the principal city in the thirteen provinces. The lower class, heated by excitement, indulged in disgraceful outrages against the revenue officers, and many respectable citizens who did not share in the general enthusiasm. The European garrison made cruel reprisals, and by speedy action the city was put under martial law, and the harbor blockaded. The interruption to navigation, and the difficulty of land communication with the rest of the province, caused great suffering in Boston, for which the whole country testified the warmest sympathy. That city, the first to give passionate expression to the general sentiment of the colonies, was honored as a martyr to public liberty, and became the cradle of a revolution whose echoes the whole world heard.*

* 1772, 1773, and 1774.

The separate provinces enjoyed such wide and undisputed liberty, that they easily formed a regular and even legal league for the defence of their common interests. New York * proposed a congress of delegates. Massachusetts, the most populous and influential of the northern provinces,† eagerly supported the proposition, which was finally adopted by the thirteen colonies, and this "Continental Congress" (the inoffensive and significant name taken by the assembly) met in Philadelphia in September and October, 1774. In good faith these representatives of the American people still sought to avoid a rupture with the mother-country; but the proposals of the English Government were none the less declared inadmissible by these continental delegates, and the complaints of the colonies were sent to the royal ministers in a spirit which contained the threat of a complete and final separation. The duty of urging these claims upon the ministry devolved chiefly upon Benjamin Franklin,‡ a citizen who personified, as it were, the habits and principles of former generations, and the tendencies of the present. In England, the Postmaster-General of America, the physicist whom discoveries in natural science had made famous, could not fail to inspire respect. In France, men saw and welcomed with singular enthusiasm the architect of his own fortunes, who affected patriarchal simplicity in appearance and manners. They were struck at first by his peculiarities; but this impression soon gave place to admiration more ardent than reasonable.

In Great Britain, the feeling about American claims was divided. Very few persons realized the importance of the subject, and the extent of the still unused resources of America, now on the verge of insurrection.

In general this transatlantic England was regarded with kindness; it was liked for its courage and its attachment to civil liberty: but they wished it to maintain toward the mother-country the submissive attitude of a son toward a father who has protected his infancy and instructed his youth. Above all things, dismemberment of the empire was feared, and on this point the commercial and political interests were equally alarmed, and equally decided not to yield. In fact, no one in England or on either continent could foresee that friendship and extended commerce between two independent nations would much more than compensate for the losses produced by the dissolution of the political tie which had united them.

This result which statesmen and business men thought impossible, because it was opposed to administrative and commercial routine, was nevertheless brought about, in spite of the bitterness and blind prejudices born of the long and bloody war, on both sides of the Atlantic. More than one generation passed, however, before confidence and cor-

* May, 1774.

† June, 1774.

‡ Benjamin Franklin, born in Boston in 1706, resided in London, as the agent for New England, from 1757. He was recalled in 1775, and soon sent back to Europe on a very different mission, which occupied him till 1783. He saw the beginning of the French revolution, as he lived till 1790.

diality were restored. The complicated questions arising from the rights of neutrals and the immunity of flags were decided differently in England and America, caused numberless combats and acts of violence on all the seas, and resulted in another formal war between Great Britain and the American Union (1812 to 1815). Time was again needed for these new wounds to heal, and commerce to resume its peaceful course. But when we compare the amount which the colonies, on the most favorable hypothesis, would, as a part of the British Empire, have contributed to the royal treasury, with the magnificent sums the United States now pour into Great Britain, in spite of the often oppressive (and as we believe unwise) duties laid by Congress, we must conclude that like all the legitimate results of true liberty the emancipation of the thirteen provinces should have been agreed to in 1774 by Great Britain; that it should have been seen as a material advantage for commerce and manufactures, which were then taking great strides, and becoming an important factor in general policy. But at that time England had not the indispensable teaching of experience, and in the discussion of new questions the first decision almost always comes from pride and prejudice.

George III. had been on the British throne* for fourteen years. He was the first among the sovereigns of his family who was English by birth, character, and language. This prince, pure in private life, of religious habits, making no distinction between the interests of the crown and the nation, united those faults of the head and virtues of the heart which characterized the best and most influential Tories. The Tories were in power, but always threatened by the systematic, often popular, and always plausible opposition of the Whigs. For six years the statesman who was justly called the "great commoner," and to whom England confessed that she owed the happy results of the Seven Years' War, William Pitt, had outlived himself under the title of Earl of Chatham. Lord North was prime minister, kept in office by the favor of the king, although the responsibility was too great for his mind and character, which were not above conscientious and partially educated mediocrity.† George III. overvalued the services of Lord North, because that minister entirely agreed with him about American claims and the policy to be followed in the government of that country. The opinion of the first lord of the treasury decided that of the council, and in the two Houses of Parliament a considerable majority supported the crown. George III. thought it very important, for the sake of conscience and honor, to preserve for

* George III., born in 1738, was the son of George Frederic, Prince of Wales, who died before his father, George II. The reign of George III. was the longest in the annals of Great Britain. Beginning in 1760, it continued, nominally it is true, till 1820. But the reign of George IV. dates, in fact, from 1809, when he was made regent. The most marked reverses, and the most brilliant triumphs, of England belong to what is called the time of George III.

† Lord North was born the same year with Washington, 1732. Upon his majority he entered the house of commons, and at twenty-six was made a member of the cabinet. As first lord of the treasury, he succeeded the Duke of Grafton in 1770.

his country the integrity of his transatlantic empire, and for his crown the totality of its prerogatives on both sides of the ocean. Consequently, and remote as he was by temperament from any form of violence, he did not hesitate to put his personal authority into the balance to secure the rejection of the American proposals. This was the opinion of the ministry and the decision of parliament. Among the orators of the Whig party, the colonies had eloquent advocates; but the vote in both houses was against them, and however opinions might differ among the ruling classes, on questions of internal policy, American affairs were left to the preferences of the king and the judgment of his ministers. To the English people, this was a question of national honor involving their claim, until then undisputed, to the supremacy of the seas. It was also a commercial question, to be settled with great care, and for the exclusive advantage of the mother-country.

The Americans, on their side, were determined not to yield their right, and nothing remained but a resort to arms. Every day inflamed the dispute; every point of contact on the wide reach of land and sea produced bitter quarrels and fights between the "islanders" and the "continentals." The first battle (and through its effects the decisive one) was in Massachusetts, between a detachment of the garrison of Boston and a few companies of provincial country militia. This fight at Lexington,* which would have been the merest skirmish in a European war, put American minds in a ferment, and set American hearts on fire. The colonists were resolved to die, if need were, for a cause which they believed just and sacred. As to-day the thrill of the electric wire carries in an instant to the limits of the vast country the knowledge of an act and the expression of a will, so the example of the Massachusetts country militia determined the thirteen colonies to maintain by arms the claims of the provinces, and no longer to retain their hitherto peaceful attitude. Before the end of May, 1775, insurrection was universal; each of the thirteen provinces had, through its representative assembly, declared its resolution to oppose the unjust claims of the crown, and for this purpose to form the militia into a continental army for a short term of service. The officers were to be commissioned by the magistrates of the different provinces. A second Congress met at Philadelphia, and appointed † Colonel George Washington, of Virginia, commander-in-chief. This choice was one of those which Providence dictates to assemblies, when it is about to make them its agents in designs which shall revolutionize the world.

Boston was the only city in the original provinces which the English army still held; the other garrisons, separated by immense distances, could hardly control the recent acquisitions of the British Crown on the American continent. The royal governors were everywhere deposed, and forced to take refuge on board the ships of war. An enthusiastic and superficial race would have thought the war ended: the Americans knew that it was hardly yet begun. There was no common government, no common policy, among the provinces: an

* April 19, 1775.

† June 15, 1775.

immediate end to be gained, an accident, as it were, had caused the convocation of an extraordinary Congress; that was all as yet. Sovereignty had not been formerly withdrawn from the crown: this chief point was still in doubt. Common action could then accomplish the work of the common will, only by the brain and force of a commander intrusted with the defence of national right. But the American continent possessed no officer of much experience in military affairs, or who had shown superior talent in any serious war. Then, too, this general, to be chosen by foreknowledge of the future, rather than consideration of the past, must have a heart free alike from the towering ambition of a Cromwell and the crafty egotism of a Monk, must desire to be the devoted servant of his country, the disinterested defender of her laws; in one word, to be what the Orientals beautifully call "the zealous advocate of justice."

With talents that were not brilliant, but were always equal to a laborious and complicated duty, Washington, by his firmness, his absolute self-possession, his perseverance, his unwavering trust in the protection of heaven, and his strict honesty in the management of public money, soon acquired an influence over the insurgent population equal to that which in his first campaign he exercised over the militia, whose regiments in too rapid succession came under his command. We may, without exaggeration, say that, from 1775 to the establishment of the Constitution in 1789, public affairs in America* depended upon one man; so that, upon several occasions, the *people* meant the army, and the army meant its general. This man was Washington. More brilliant qualities, a more hasty temper, a heart conscious of the temptations of personal fame, would have destroyed the harmony of this unique character: history gives no other perfect example of such a character, and the century which has passed since he lived has nowhere produced his peer. Washington, born in 1732, was in middle age, in full strength of mind and body, in perfect health, and fully conscious of his intellectual power, when the unanimous vote of the delegates from the thirteen provinces made him commander-in-chief of the American army.

A large royal garrison held Boston still in subjection. It was rightly considered the key to New England, and was undoubtedly—in intelligence, wealth, and population—the most important town that English colonization had up to that time planted in America. To deliver this natural capital of their country was the first, and, for a time, the only object of the levy of troops in the provinces. But Washington could only lay siege to the city. Nevertheless, an enthusiasm which he could not oppose, although he believed its immediate success impossible, led the American soldiers to make an assault on the city of the Pilgrims. The redoubt on Bunker Hill became, on the 17th of June, 1775, the scene of a battle which in American annals is described with the enthusiasm and tenderness that the remembrance of Morgarten excites in the Swiss cantons. On both sides, the courage

* Romana stetit res.

was equal. Every soldier who fought in that narrow space believed the right was on his side; the names of Prescott and Howe, reconciled in a common glory, will live, like those of the heroic soldiers whose dust rests in brotherhood beneath the monumental stone on the plains of Abraham.*

The year 1775 was the precursor of great mental activity in Europe. Watchful of the quarrel between England and her colonies, the Old World believed that she saw new destinies for the human race revealed in the principles declared by the Americans, and in the first acts which followed this declaration. Souls, especially in France and Germany, glowed with the ardor of passion and the simplicity of inexperience. They made ready for the coming of the golden age, and that generation was often more unreasonable than when it hoped to find perfection in the future, rather than to imagine it in the past.

Louis XVI. had just been anointed king. Inheriting power beyond the strength of his mind or character, burdened with a terrible succession of faults committed by his predecessors, and whose gravity he did not conceal, this young prince, irreproachable in manners, loyal in intention, sincere in his love for his people, understood, at least partially, the need of important reforms in all branches of the public service. But his authority, absolute in theory, was in fact, strictly limited by custom and even by institutions. The king had neither the energy necessary to overthrow obstacles, nor the fatalistic temper that would accept them and let things alone. On one side customs were sustained that time had loaded with abuses, but that still appeared as respectable traditions; this category begins with the *olim* of parliament, and ends with the details of court etiquette. On the other side, the doctrines of the philosophic school had acquired over the mind and even over the conscience of the nation the authority of real dogmas, while they still floated in the vagueness of Utopia; irritated, but not repressed, by the ill-combined resistance of the established authorities, these doctrines took the aggressive form of revolutionary prophecies. From this condition of mind, and this struggle sure to continue, it resulted that the monarch had the whole responsibility of events, but only an indefinite share in the possession or exercise of power.

Philosophic culture, aspiring with proud confidence to govern affairs by intellect, presented at this time two distinct phases. On one side, the publicists and economists; on the other, theorists boldly criticising political and social systems. In the first group learning, calm meditation, conscientious experiments, wise love of humanity and knowledge of the best means to serve it, were united in those hard-working writers formed by the instructions of Montesquieu, Quesney, and Turgot. Pre-eminent in this honorable company are the keen intellect, the affectionate and strong heart, of Malesherbes. This school gave fraternal greeting to the works of the great contemporary jurists of Italy. Beccaria was respected equally on both sides of the Alps; and Filangieri disseminated in Naples the teaching of the "Esprit des Lois."

* Montcalm and Wolfe under the walls of Quebec in 1759. The defeat of the former was that of Leonidas, and the latter died in the hour of victory.

The other group of writers and thinkers who agitated France followed very different ways. Viewing the present with pity and the past with horror, misled by the examples of *classical* antiquity, from which in college they had gathered false ideas, wholly inapplicable to modern society; burning, moreover, with an audacious desire to renew religion, legislation, and social order, according to types existing only in their imaginations, these theorists, who arrogantly took the name of philosophers, were at once the most dangerous dreamers and the most powerful tempters who had appeared in Europe since the great eras of the revival of letters and the Reformation. Multitudes of all classes eagerly read their declamations, which were sometimes eloquent, but generally puffed up with sonorous platitudes and high-sounding sophisms. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the oracle of this school, was surpassed by his disciples, who were not, like him, saved from gross mistakes by a genuine sentiment for the beauties of nature, and an occasional experience of kind feelings.

Between these two companies who had no concert of action, but gained equal success in their different spheres, shone a constellation of learned mathematicians, astronomers, physicists, naturalists, and physicians, who carried the exact sciences forward rapidly and steadily. Respectful towards the established policy of government, these men, among whom Buffon worthily sustained the honor of the country of Descartes, excited by the novelty of their demonstrations the distrust and protest of the clergy: this misunderstanding was unfortunate, and of benefit only to the materialists, who now began boldly to defy the restraints of the law, having already violently broken away from the authority of the schools.

No serious thinker will reproach us with overstating the influence on the political destiny of our nation of this intellectual excitement at the time of the American war; and it would be equally impossible to deny the power, almost without counterpoise, that the dominant opinions of France (whether really or only apparently so) had at the same time over the rest of the European continent. In consequence of the last war of the preceding reign, the kingdom of Louis XIV., although enlarged in territory,* had politically fallen from the eminent place she had held since the ministry of Richelieu. Her armies were less formidable, the poverty and disorder of her finances were known, the talents of her negotiators were undervalued. But her language had by universal consent become the speech of diplomacy and of international *instruments*, as fashion had made it the language of polite society from the Tagus to the Neva. France ruled by her geniis even the people who had overcome her; all minds turned to her with submission rather than jealousy; to be approved in Paris was the highest aim of all political and literary ambition; the prestige which Athens, even after the loss of her power, so long maintained over Greek, Asiatic, and Roman antiquity, belonged to the France of Voltaire and Buffon.

* By the annexation in 1766 of the Duchies of Lorraine and Bar, and in 1769 of the Island of Corsica.

The king shared in this tumult of thought, only by his generous desire to put an end to every form of oppression and injustice; he was inclined to confer civil rights on dissenters, and would have removed all trace of serfdom; he thought favorably of free trade at first between the provinces of his kingdom, afterwards among the nations of the whole world; he had a noble but not aggressive pride in the national dignity. At the beginning of his reign, he called to his council science and virtue, personified in Turgot and Malesherbes: but, in his eagerness to repair the last and most unpopular of the violent acts of his predecessor, he placed in his own path a fatal obstacle to reforms; he recalled the parliament which Louis XV. had dissolved, and restored its power of making good the claims which it sanctified by the name of "rights"; so that henceforward, instead of being an honored mediator between the sovereign and the people, it only checked the benevolent action of the former, and drove to madness the impatience of the latter, already duped by the exaggerations and fantasies of the fashionable philosophy.

Instead of recalling to the ministry the Duc de Choiseul, whose obvious faults were counterbalanced by rare gifts, Louis XVI., conscientiously following the recommendation of the dauphin his father,* turned to Maurepas, whom a long absence, passed in indolence and frivolity, had deprived of the advantages given him by age, and the experience in affairs which he formerly had under the regency.

But in giving to Necker, whom public opinion marked out as the most skilful and honest of financiers, the task of restoring the credit of the kingdom, then on the verge of ruin, Louis XVI., by a praiseworthy effort, conquered his personal feelings, and even the prejudices which education had deeply rooted in his mind.

All Europe was then at peace. Catharine the Great had stopped her victorious † troops on the road to Byzantium. The Ottoman empire began again to enjoy for another century the protection which a political theory, passed into a dogma, granted it on the part of the western powers. The first partition of Poland had been accomplished ‡ without bloodshed; and that nation seemed ready to profit by the ter-

* The prominent part taken by the Duc de Choiseul in the expulsion of the Jesuits from the kingdom, and in the succeeding steps leading to the suppression of the order by Clement XIV., had deeply offended the heir to the French crown. Angry words between the dauphin and M. de Choiseul made it impossible for the minister to serve as a counsellor for the dauphin, who would become his master, if, in the order of nature, the son outlived his father. The Due de Berry, whom the premature death of his two elder brothers had made heir-presumptive and second dauphin, was only two years old when the death of the only son of Louis XV., in the flower of his age, put France in mourning, and was looked upon as the beginning of those calamities vaguely foreseen in the future. The men charged with the education of the new dauphin did not neglect to impress upon him the aversion which his father felt for Choiseul, and to make him resolve to keep that minister in disgrace, although the cause of his downfall, brought about by Mme. du Barry, was an honor to him.

† Treaty of Kainardji, signed in 1774.

‡ Agreement concluded in 1772 between the dividing powers, and signed by the Polish government in 1773.

rible lesson, and to introduce indispensable reforms in its social organization. The events which followed in America found the Old World in condition to give them its exclusive and earnest attention, soon growing into passion, as at that time every great and new thing did.

From the first representations made by American assemblies, and the first engagements between English troops and the sons of liberty in New England, the almost universal feeling in Europe was admiration and sympathy, not for the English, who were defending the supremacy of Europe and the universal system of colonial government, but for the Americans, who were driving back one and preparing fatal blows for the other.

We can understand why Frederic and Catharine, governing with the brilliancy and power of genius the two nations most recently admitted to the "European Alliance," were unhesitatingly favorable to a revolution which in no way injured them, but might revive their commerce and re-establish equality of flags on the seas frequented by their merchant ships. But France, Spain, and Holland, maritime powers, and overvaluing their transatlantic possessions, needed only calm reflection to see that, in favoring the American colonies, they shook to its foundation and menaced with ruin their own immense colonial system.

This system was in fact incomparably more severe, more pledged to monopolies, and to the absolute subjection of the provinces, than any which the British government, even in its harshest and proudest moods, had dreamed of imposing upon the American colonies.

But Europe was still under the influence of the treaty of Versailles, that triumph for England. The treaty was only eleven years old, and nothing had occurred to weaken its important results. England assumed the right of regulating, according to her own customs and for her own interest, the laws of navigation on the high seas. It was almost universally believed, although it was certainly an error, that the possession of the old thirteen provinces in North America was the chief element of the commercial prosperity and political greatness of the *Queen of the Ocean*. People were far from foreseeing that conditions of commercial equality between the mother-country and the countries which she had settled beyond the Atlantic would yield more real advantages to England than her former sovereignty, and that she need not buy those advantages by heavy military expenses, and the painful labor of holding restless and angry vassals in subjection.

All this explains why jealousy and vindictiveness prevailed in the cabinets first of Versailles, then of Madrid, and at last at the Hague; and why they outweighed the counsels of sound statesmanship. In the united provinces, the envy and fanatical hostility of the people urged on the government; but, in France, one of the striking inconsistencies of the time was, that admiration for English institutions, curiosity about English thought, a passion for English customs, were the fashion with the upper classes, at the very time they eagerly took part against England. Louis XVI. and the most intelligent of his ministers watched with deserved distrust the effects of this Anglo-mania not only on the fashions, but also on religious and political opinions. At the same time,

national enmity, which had never been extinguished, and which the disaster of the Seven Years' War inflamed, acted with equal force on the nobility, the army, the navy, and on the whole nation, fond of war, proud of a superiority incontestable in its own eyes, with natural gifts, and an ambition to make its voice heard by its own and by foreign governments in the discussion of the great affairs of the world.

The king of France was far from sympathizing with the ardor and determination of his people. Hatred was foreign to the nature of Louis XVI. His ambition was to re-establish order in the finances, and to improve the legislation of his country; peaceful by temperament, he was not less so by delicacy of conscience. Duty was always before his eyes; the study of French history had taught him to deplore alike the extravagance of his two predecessors, and the useless and unjust wars which had filled the principal part of their long reigns. But, inheriting the rank which Louis XIV. had held in the world, and which Louis XV. partially forfeited, Louis XVI. neglected nothing to uphold the claims of his crown by powerful forces on land and on sea.

His army, in which the foreign element might be thought too large, was hardly equalled in Europe; and there was none that could be called superior. The navy had made good its losses, and boasted of seamen who had never been surpassed: is it not enough to mention the Baily de Suffren, the Comte de Grasse, and the Admiral d'Estaing? The king was the more easily persuaded to use these magnificent instruments. Nevertheless, he decided only after long hesitation, after bitter conflict with his conscience and his sagacity: in fine, this resolution was, like the other decisive acts of his life; he obeyed, instead of commanding; he yielded to the excitement of the popular will.

Every thing, then, conspired to fix the attention of the Old World upon America; to turn upon the questions raised in America the thoughts and passions of an age of immense intellectual activity. The commissioners sent by Congress with diplomatic powers to the different governments of Europe, and received merely as official agents, sought to make friends among the ruling classes, by the propagation of their doctrines and the contagion of their ideas. Maria Theresa, indeed, refused to receive any of them, and Frederic adroitly avoided either receiving or rejecting them. But the envoys were listened to at the Hague, at Madrid, and still more at Paris, where Franklin, the only thoroughly consistent man among them before Adams came to Europe, soon acquired influence to which the prudent Vergennes was obliged to make concessions; but the persuasive eloquence of the advocate of the rebels had no hold on the inflexible principles and clear foresight of the firm and cool Turgot.

Meanwhile the last appeal of the American Congress to the king and parliament of Great Britain having obtained no proposition for peace which the colonies were willing to accept, George III. and his ministers took energetic measures to increase their army in America. But the British people, although in sympathy with their sovereign, furnished a very small number of voluntary recruits, and England had

never dreamed of conscription for service out of the country.* Recourse to foreign States was necessary for the purpose of hiring troops. It was first in Russia, then in Prussia, that George III. exhausted all the resources of his ingenious, rather than scrupulous, diplomacy, and used all his personal influence to persuade the courts of Europe that the cause of Great Britain in America was the cause of all monarchs. All overtures to the great courts failed, but the smaller States yielded to the temptation of English subsidies. Troops enough, and for the most part well disciplined, were raised in Hesse, and in some portions of lower Saxony and Franconia. At this news, there was an outbreak of public indignation not only in France, but in the Netherlands and many parts of Germany. One can see by this how two centuries had changed the feelings and convictions of Europe, where the profession of arms was still the most honorable of all professions, if it was not the most popular. Until the end of the sixteenth century, and even during the Thirty Years' War, it was entirely lawful for the ruler of a country to put the flower of his people into military service, under conditions fixed by himself, and for any cause that he thought would be of advantage to himself; but in 1775 the general cry was that the blood of the people should be shed only in defence of their own independence, or at least in the service of their own interests. In England, the opposition orators enlarged upon this theme with the warmth of conviction, sincere in most of them, and well feigned by the rest. Nevertheless, the German troops fought bravely in America; but the employment of them destroyed the last trace of that traditional affection, which, in spite of political differences, would have continued to exist for a long time between the mother-country and her colonies.

Determined henceforth to spare nothing, the colonies proposed an alliance with Canada and Nova Scotia, in order to leave to the English army no line of operation on the continent, and to oppose a compact body to any military force employed to compel English America to accept any other terms than those which Congress made its *ultimatum*. But, on this point only, the skill of the English government had foiled in advance the American plans. The "Canadian Bill," passed by Parliament in 1774, had granted to this country (which had become a mixed colony, French in the East, English in the West) a charter of provincial liberties which surpassed the hopes of the inhabitants, and satisfied their highest claims. The military government, imposed in 1760 after the reduction of Montreal, was abolished; the Catholics were to have full civil rights, and at the same time they acquired political rights, of which they had been totally deprived under French rule. Hence they became loyal subjects of Great Britain, without affection, to be sure, but nevertheless useful allies, provided they were not sent out of their country.

Washington acted then rashly, although generously, when, at the request of Congress, more ignorant even than he was of the real state

* It was different with the militia.

of affairs, he decided * to send to Canada a considerable detachment of the continental army, of imperfect discipline and ill provided. The brilliant gallantry of Richard Montgomery could not supply those resources necessary to hold Montreal, still less to reduce Quebec. But, for the second time, the most heroic blood of both hemispheres was shed under the walls of the proud capital of New France; after the death of Montgomery, whose fate called out expressions of tender sympathy in both camps, Morgan and the other generals led steadily and successfully the retreat of the American army, in mid-winter, to those Thermopylae of New England,† to which new feats of arms would give new fame.

It was impossible for so complete a revolution to be on the eve of consummation in the thirteen provinces, without a division of parties in the Presbyterian colonies of the North, and among the planters of the south heirs of the *cavaliers* of the time of the Stuarts. In reality, at the beginning of the troubles, a party of *loyalists* was formed, who were attached to their country, but wished to preserve allegiance to their sovereign. Convinced that the propositions of the British minister ought to be accepted as the basis of a reasonable agreement, these Americans refused to enter the ranks of the militia raised to fight against the crown. The first severe measures against these few but resolute adherents to the old order of things were decreed by Congress at the beginning of the year 1776. Washington constantly endeavored to soften in practice the treatment which popular passion, so naturally blind and brutal, often made odious, but which reasons of State deemed necessary.

At the South, the loyalists, uniting with the small bodies of marines at the disposal of the royal governors, delayed for a short time, and at the cost of much suffering, the adhesion of these colonies to the policy of Congress, accepted with much less opposition by the North. To day the hatred is extinct, and justice has her dues. Americans who are the avowed opponents of the principles for which the loyalists struggled and suffered recognize the fact that, with the exception of a few adventurers whose memory is for ever disgraced, this party towards which the American Union was inexorable until after the final republican victory and the conclusion of peace with the mother-country, deserved the esteem which is excited by generous sentiments, and the respectful pity due to great misfortunes borne with dignity.

In March, 1776, General Howe,‡ yielding, after a courageous resistance, to the persistency of an adversary who revived the victorious patience of the ancient Fabius, decided to evacuate Boston, and to make New York the seat of war, reduced as he was to a single army

* September, 1775.

† Military positions near Lakes George and Champlain, and at the head-waters of the Hudson. The fate of Canada, defended by Montcalm, was decided in these regions in the campaigns of 1758 and 1759.

‡ Lord Howe, his elder brother, was at the same time commander of the English naval forces on the American coast.

corps, with which to conquer the whole immense continent. This resolution prolonged the war for six campaigns: it was, however, considered in Europe a confession of inferiority, and the American cause gained that increase of favor which the multitude instinctively gives to superior power, as well as to the promises of fortune.

Meanwhile it became clear to all reflective men that war must be the arbiter between the parties in this contest. The alternative for the colonies was absolute submission or definite separation. They would accept nothing from the favor or the free-will of the king of Great Britain: they desired a formal contract based on the acknowledgment of their right. Any return to the misunderstandings, contradictions, and collisions that had made so much misery under their former rule seemed intolerable to them; they believed that laying down their arms at this time would be the virtual renunciation of the only sure guarantee for their liberties; finally, they had tasted the reality of independence, and they desired to make it the foundation of their future existence. Towards the middle of the year 1776, minds and consciences were ready for the mighty but single step into freedom.

The province of Virginia was the first which dared to make the declaration of which modern history, up to that time, offered only a single precedent; that of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, when, by the manifesto of Utrecht, in 1579, these countries formally repudiated the sovereignty of King Philip II., a sovereignty which had been respected in theory and in words to the middle of the civil war. Washington, from his headquarters, gave approbation and encouragement to this resolution, which Richard Henry Lee presented to Congress, then sitting in Philadelphia. The vote of this assembly, where thirteen *States* (the term provinces was dropped with the allegiance to England) were represented by forty-nine deputies, was declared, after the most mature and calm deliberation, on July 2d, 1776. The words of the resolution, which made a new era in universal history, should be transcribed in their strong and grave simplicity.

Resolved, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, dissolved."

The declaration, which was to make this known to the thirteen colonies, (and we may add, without exaggeration, to all Europe watching for this event); this declaration, of which the future consequences were incalculable, was prepared by Thomas Jefferson, the first jurist and publicist among the statesmen of Virginia. No military hand had touched this work; Washington and the army desired but did not dictate it; their part, to which they held with modest and assiduous zeal, was to make it respected when it became the law of the country, and to demand the recognition of it as the end of the war with the powerful adversary who spared no pains to bring it to naught.

A statement of the grievances of the colonies against the English government forms the second part of the declaration. It was in its time of great interest to belligerent nations; a knowledge of it is still essen-

tial to the understanding of this portion of American history. But the proclamation of principles on which the American Congress based the *Revolution*, which it called openly by this name, and from which it dated the new existence of its country, was in reality addressed to all nations which shared in modern civilization. Not only the States hostile to it, but entire Europe witnessing this radical innovation, considered the declaration as the expression of a new era.* It reads: "That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

Two points in this are to be especially noted and remembered: first, the government of George III. was not renounced by Congress because it was monarchical; limited monarchy with a national representation had up to this time been the choice of American public men; but this authority was renounced, because, in the decided opinion of the American people, it had exceeded its prerogative, and violated the rights guaranteed to the colonies by solemn compacts:† second, although, in the Declaration, the Creator is named with reverence as the author of all good, and the source of all law, yet the use of Bible language was carefully avoided in the revision of the act; there is nothing to indicate to an ordinary reader that it represents the religious convictions and the will of a nation definitely and exclusively Christian. A century earlier, in such a juncture, the style adopted by the organs of the nation would have been very different; but, in the Presbyterian colonies particularly, we cannot doubt that the principles and conclusions would have been identical with those of 1776.

The 4th of July, the day of the official announcement of the Declaration, has ever since been kept in the United States as the birthday and national holiday of the American Republic.

The declaration of the independence of the United States produced an immense sensation in Europe. It was an absolutely new event in modern history; an event which deranged all recognized alliances, introduced a novel and still problematical ‡ factor into general politics; and, what was still more serious, it responded to newly awakened passions, and opened the way of entrance, into active and practical politics, for ideas formidable by their magnitude, their demands, and their vague generalizations.

It was, indeed, a challenge which the New World sent to the Old, that

* "Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo." (Virgilii Bucolica, Ec. IV. v. 1.)

† Bancroft, History of the American Revolution, vol. ii. chap. 70, *ad finem*.

‡ In its results.

until now had been looked upon as the owner of America, and the undoubted leader of the whole civilized world. This calm and authoritative voice spoke the language of the most energetic race in the world, and one which best knew political liberty by experience, theory, and practice.

Throughout all Europe, from Ireland to Poland and Greece, minds which the philosophic school, reviving and re-enforcing the lessons of the classical school, had taught to appreciate the vices of contemporary society and to hope every thing from the future, were in ferment over this event. This, in the confusion of brilliant dreams, gave a glimpse of the endless progress whose partial realization must cost nations passionate struggles and incalculable suffering.

In France, with which we are especially concerned, the almost universal sympathy of the upper classes, filled with military ardor, forced the hand of a king, just, but doubting his own power, and a divided and unpopular ministry. This enthusiasm for novelty discredited the political traditions which the philosophical school had made so popular. So, months before Louis XVI. had decided in council to assist the American rebels, generous volunteers and shrewd speculators undertook to furnish soldiers and arms to the Americans, whose name, Independents, was considered an honorable designation. Government watched this alliance, without daring to oppose it, for some time before it openly encouraged it; and France was equally interested in its two elements represented by Lafayette and Beaumarchais. Fashion, that tyrant of what is called society, had taken Americans under her protection. She cared little for the colleagues of Franklin, who had nevertheless special talents, but she flattered the chief commissioner of Congress, until the extravagant admiration lavished on him would have made him ridiculous, if his solid virtues and intelligent patriotism had not lifted him above the silly deification decreed him by the modern spirit and its curious levity.

Franklin's task was, nevertheless, one of the most difficult that it is possible to imagine. The United States possessed, in fact, a vast territory inhabited by brave and industrious people; a great future was before them; but, at present, they had for their struggle with the richest nation on earth, no munitions of war, no military equipments, no money, and, what was still worse, no permanent organization. The confederation, hardly more than proposed, could not put at the disposal of Congress the resources which different parts of the country possessed: Congress itself was only an assembly of deputies sent by thirteen distinct States, each jealous for its own sovereignty; so, even while harmony reigned in their sentiments, it rarely existed among their opinions. Congress could order levies of men, could assign its contingent in money to each State; but it had no power to execute its orders. Every State arrogated to itself the right of interpreting them in its own way, and received them as simple recommendations.

In such a situation, it seemed evident that, without the assistance of one or more of the European powers, the American war would end in the total defeat of the Independents. It was apparent that the British

forces could not actually pacify and usefully occupy so vast an extent of territory, stretching far into the continent; victory must be fruitless in a country where each inhabitant was at heart hostile to foreign rule; but it seemed probable that English arms would disorganize local administrations, prevent another session of Congress, and, in a word, destroy the United States, and plunge the whole country into confusion, ruinous for transatlantic England; but from which Great Britain would gain only a barren triumph, and a burden of expenses for uncomited years.

The bitter feelings awakened by the war blinded the British parliament to these truths, while in France, where they still reasoned coolly, the friends of America concealed nothing. Consequently, their solicitations to the minister, and to the king himself, became continually more urgent and even threatening. Because the monarch of the oldest and most absolute government in the world held in his hand all administrative power, they wished to force upon him the part of chief actor in a revolution which, if successful, would necessarily place before France the alternative of promptly carrying out social reforms in her own organization, or of braving the incalculable chances of a struggle against an inevitable revolution.

This unnatural state of suspense and change in the counsels of the monarch lasted two full years, during which small quantities of arms and ammunition, and inconsiderable sums of money, advanced secretly by the treasury, were sent to the United States, adding little to the resources of the army, but keeping up the hopes of statesmen and the confidence of the people in the ultimate success of their undertaking through an offensive alliance with France.

Washington saw more clearly than any one else the needs and the dangers of the army and the nation, and so, more than any one else, was frank and urgent in his communications to Congress and his correspondence with American agents abroad. He could see safety for the United States only in a formal alliance with France; in words, where modesty was united with perfect dignity, he placed his country under the protection of Louis XVI.; he did not deceive himself as to the small assistance to be gained at this time from Holland, or even from Spain.

Meanwhile the American war grew to huge proportions; the two armies, moderate in number, equal in courage and perseverance, measured their strength on battle-fields from the banks of the St. Lawrence to the shores of Georgia. Congress was eager to acquire Canada, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland; Great Britain would yield nothing of the immense empire which she thought the treaty of 1763 had consolidated, and which stretched from the Northern Ocean to the Mexican Gulf, from the Mississippi to the Atlantic, from Labrador to the Bahama Channel. The summer of 1776 was spent by Congress, after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, in regulating the work of the Confederation. In September, the arrival in America of the young Marquis de Lafayette was hailed as the forerunner of the French alliance, and the promise of a formal treaty with a nation

whose universal prestige had suffered little from the series of reverses she had borne towards the end of the last war, which she persistently carried on in many lands, and on all the seas of the globe.*

Lafayette, at nineteen, without worldly experience, or practice in war, was, nevertheless, the fascinating ideal of the French nobility, the model of modern chivalry, so different in feeling and faith from that of former days. A few gentlemen, leaving, like him, the restless frivolity of court, or the idleness of garrisons on a peaceful frontier, accompanied to America the young volunteer, whom there awaited, in his own country, at a distance of only thirteen years, a future which he could not foresee of bewildering changes, political greatness, and cruel sorrows.

The example which he set, of departing without the consent of the king and braving the displeasure of the minister, was soon followed by soldiers and adventurers very unequal in character and capacity. The first were Poles, whom the recent disasters of their country had driven to foreign lands, and of whom Pulaski and Kosciuszko were the most important; the next were German officers, grown gray in harness, and seeking only to continue their trade on new fields of battle or strategy. Washington received them all warmly, and employed them with all the discretion he was permitted to use. But Lafayette became his favorite pupil. The young volunteer soon surpassed the hopes of his general, by the quickness of his understanding, and the cool courage with which he performed the difficult tasks often confided to him.

In the mean time, it became necessary to thoroughly revise the separate constitutions of the States belonging to the *Union*, proposed, rather than accomplished, in order that the different original charters should be made to agree essentially with the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence. This labor occupied the intervals which the war allowed to public councils from the summer of 1776 to the close of 1782. In this work, which was happily finished long before the Federal Constitution was complete, the newly emancipated States of America gave to Europe a wholesome example, which unfortunately was not sufficiently heeded, nor clearly understood, and not followed on any of the occasions which afterwards presented themselves. It was a matter of course that the office of royal governor, and that of the hereditary magistrates, who continued the succession of the *proprietors*, the founders, by the original cession of several colonies,† should be

* The surname and family name of the Marquis de Lafayette, Gilbert Motier, was inherited from an ancestor, Marshal of France, and one of the later heroes in the Hundred Years' War against England. This lieutenant of Charles VII. died in 1464. The name of Lafayette was brilliant in literature also; the age of Louis XIV. produced no more charming and solid talent than that of the faithful friend of La Rochefoucauld and Mme. de Sévigné. The alliance of the young Marquis de Lafayette with the family of Noailles increased his influence at court, and established him firmly in the world.

† They were Maryland; the two Jerseys, united in one province; Pennsylvania; and, in some particulars, New York. Already, by successive modifications

abolished. But these offices, with the privileges derived from feudalism, were the only ones abolished. Nowhere else did the American people risk entering the path of innovation. They preserved all of the colonial organization that was sound, and adapted to the future growth of public affairs. Each State retained legislative power, by means of elective assemblies; usually there were two of these, checking and supporting each other. A council, also elective, and charged with executive powers, had the right of nomination to public offices. The president of this body, first officer of the State, preserved the ancient and honored title of governor. In some States, Roman Catholics were disfranchised; but this restriction soon gave way before the progress of ideas of universal toleration. A certain amount of property was, with fixed conditions of age and moral character, a requisite qualification for the exercise of the elective franchise. Nothing was introduced into legislation which could favor license of writing or lessen respect for property. The terrible question of slavery forced itself upon the consideration of all the legislatures, but was seriously treated only in New England and Pennsylvania. These five States decided it in accordance with the principles of humanity and the suggestions of prudence. The Union so lately formed of so diverse elements, and so imperfectly cemented, had not the resolution, and probably not the power, to extend to the Southern States the plan for the gradual emancipation of slaves which was gloriously adopted by the North. We would gladly turn our eyes away from this great injustice, this great danger. How different the Constitution of the Great Republic of the West would have been, on this Centennial Jubilee of the Union, if the fathers of independence had been willing and able to render to their country this other service, equal or superior, in moral and political value, to all those which America owes to them in the eighteenth century!

It is impossible not to delay the reader for a moment on this subject, which was one of the chief causes of the most gigantic civil war of modern times, and which raised storms of tumultuous sympathy throughout the Christian world.

At this time, slavery and the slave trade were equally condemned by the philosophic school; but its abolition did not seem to be imperatively demanded by Christianity, and economists considered the continuance, even the extension, of this custom as absolutely essential to the life of the colonies. Among the firmest champions of American independence in France and in the New World were slaveholders who never dreamed of freeing their slaves. Washington regretted that this institution existed in Virginia, but he never proposed to abolish it. In the Southern States, they feared for the future of the plantations, if the negroes were not kept by force. But the Middle and Northern States had little to lose by the gradual emancipation of negroes. These

of the original charters, the rights of the proprietors had been restricted to the use of municipal and provincial liberties, and was merely a source of revenue. In both the Carolinas and in Georgia, these rights had entirely disappeared, reverting to the crown.

States had the great merit of being the first in their age to pass from the theory to the practice of the evangelical teachings, equally wise and humane, which condemned forced labor and arbitrary payment. But they could act freely without making great sacrifices. From 1774 to 1800, the financial condition of the Union was such that all men of affairs would have shrunk from the redemption, even at a very low rate, of the four hundred thousand human beings then held in bondage south of the Susquehanna. The sum of eighty or a hundred millions of dollars exceeded the credit as well as the resources of the whole Confederation. In a situation similar to that of English America, Peter the Great, fifty years before, had thought it impossible to abolish serfdom in Russia. His noble successor, Alexander II., has resolutely and prudently brought about this change, in the most successful manner. He was sustained by the spirit of his age, and by the extent of the resources which public prosperity put at his disposal. Providence did not grant Washington this precious boon. America, when she entered upon her new career, was doubtful and timid in a matter which, above all, she should have taken hold of and regulated. If she had acted according to her convictions, she would have won immortal glory, and would have been spared — for the issue was delayed only two generations — calamities from which memory shrinks, and which sadden prophecy.

As a whole, the political action of the United States showed Europe how far nations can carry reform, without overthrowing social order and flinging themselves into the darkness of revolution, of which even the benefits are stained by violence. England alone profited by this calm and beautiful lesson. She could overcome her natural vexation, and receive from a recent enemy suggestions, wisely used by statesmen worthy the esteem and gratitude of posterity. But in France, and on the continent generally, attention was given to that which Americans destroyed, and contempt to that which they by improving had preserved and consolidated. The consequences of this false and partial view were not long delayed; but we cannot with justice lay the responsibility of them on America, who offered the safeguard with the danger.

The first assistance given to the United States, with the connivance but without the official approbation of the French Government, placed that government in an equivocal and undignified position towards England.

Besides, these small contributions served only to keep hope alive in the Americans, but did not help them to fight with any real chance of success. Philadelphia was occupied by Sir William Howe on the 26th of September, 1777. Congress, instead of dispersing, boldly adjourned to Baltimore. The temporary occupation of the city, then considered the political capital of the country, produced more excitement in Europe than in America, where, as Mr. Bancroft says, with equal wisdom and boldness, "it was a war of ideas more than of material power."* It was the same in the second and last war of

* History of the American Revolution, vol. iii. p. 405.

Great Britain with the United States. At that time, Washington and Philadelphia surrendered to an army better disciplined than their own, and to a navy which had then no rival on the seas. Yet the conditions of peace* were favorable to America, who did not give up an inch of her territory, or yield one of her just claims.

Before the close of this year, a decisive action took place, which more than counterbalanced the disaster at Philadelphia. This event of the war occurred in the North, on one of those battle-fields where, since the discovery by Champlain to the latest laurels gathered by Montcalm, French blood has flowed in so many encounters. The army corps under General Burgoyne was moving from Montreal to New York; if the corresponding movement had been carried out by the other half of the English army, holding the mouths of the Hudson and the Delaware, the rebel territory would have been literally cut in two. This result must have discouraged even the energetic characters and manly souls of New England; but Burgoyne, surrounded in the forests of Saratoga, by militia under General Gates, was compelled on Oct. 13, 1777, to sign a capitulation, by the terms of which he was to embark his troops at Boston for England, and promise not to serve again against America during the war. This expedition, which deprived the English of ten thousand soldiers, ought to have finished the war.

In fact, the best judges of military matters, the masters of the art of war in the Old World, agreed unanimously that, after the capture of Burgoyne, the English could by no possibility regain a foothold in the northern provinces, by whose resolution and resources the war was chiefly sustained. Frederic, laying aside his habitual reserve, expressed this conviction in free and plain terms. This monarch did not like the English government, although he professed great esteem for the British people. He had a sad remembrance of the work of the Tory ministry during the Seven Years' War, when, notwithstanding the entire unity of interests between Great Britain and Prussia, the latter had been assisted tardily, imperfectly, and with marked unwillingness, by the great and rich power which ran the same risks with Frederic, but in its policy followed a course too selfish to be sagacious. The American war gave the king of Prussia occasion to show his resentment, not by action, but by severe expressions of opinion, by putting the weight of his judgment, acknowledged to be the most influential in Europe, into the scale against England.

In Great Britain, national honor seemed more than ever at hazard; and the attitude of France becoming at once more manifestly hostile, the fierce and implacable opposition between the nations blazed out with unquenchable fury. It was on this occasion that the shrewd and determined minister of Louis XVI., Vergennes, obtained from his master authority to conclude with the United States a treaty of commerce and amity. From this it resulted, not only that France acknowledged the independence of the colonies, but that the king agreed

* Peace of Ghent, signed in 1814.

to give them his support in establishing their sovereignty on a firm foundation. This treaty was signed at Versailles, Feb. 6, 1778, and at the same time ships of war were put in commission to convoy merchant squadrons to American ports. Such proceedings clearly implied war with England; but with a lingering hesitation, caused by his conscience, Louis XVI. wished to throw upon his rival the responsibility of pronouncing the fatal word. By his order, in March, the French ambassador in London officially notified his Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State of the existence of a treaty of commerce and friendship, which his most Christian majesty had concluded with the United States of America, "that are in full possession of their independence, declared on the 4th of July, 1776."

To this decisive communication, George III. made the reply expected by both nations. He recalled his ambassador from Paris, and presented to parliament, where his ministers were sure of a sufficient majority, the measures necessary for the conduct on a suitable scale of a war which should extend to all parts of the world.

On the 20th of March, 1778, Franklin and his colleagues, who had been officially recognized as commissioners from Congress, had a formal audience with Louis XVI. The coldness and harshness which on this occasion the king took no pains to conceal showed how little his sagacious mind and sensitive conscience were affected by the popular enthusiasm which had spread through his whole court. But the die was cast. M. Gérard de Rayneval, one of the warmest friends of Vergennes, was sent as minister plenipotentiary to Congress; he embarked on a squadron, which sailed from Toulon the 10th of April, with a large quantity of military stores for the Americans.

A single incident, which shows the spirit of the age, idolizing the pleasures of intellect, and intoxicated by the view of an enchanting future, was then exciting all Paris much more than the beginning of a war in which torrents of blood would flow. Voltaire, returning to the capital after an absence of twenty years, presented to the French Academy, in solemn session,* and by a condescension almost unprecedented in its annals, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, calling them the "forerunners in Europe of the star of liberty which had risen in America."

During the stormy debates which the proposition of the king raised in both houses of parliament, Chatham, then near his end, made his appearance once more in the house of lords, and, on the 7th of April, uttered, in a dying voice, his final protest against the use of inhuman proceedings in the American war, including in his condemnation the very "principle of that unnatural war between two sister nations." The time was long past when the eloquence of the "great commoner" moved the souls of the people, and decided the votes of the senate. But, in tragic dignity, the closing scene of that long life † was worthy of the

* The 27th April, 1778.

† William Pitt, first of the name, was born in 1708. Entering the cabinet in

drama of which fifteen years before the peace of Versailles had seemed to give England the glorious end,—a drama about to recommence under strangely different auspices. The house of lords did not attend Chatham's funeral. He had, in fact, never belonged, by sentiment or sympathy, to the hereditary branch of the British legislature. The first Pitt gave to England, to the house of commons, in his second son, who never wished to be other than William Pitt,* a genius less proud than his own, but a character better fitted to combat with the difficulties of all kinds that embarrassed his career, even when he demanded immense sacrifices of the nation without being able to promise immediate success, but still a patriotism more enlightened, a genius which seldom won admiration, but always inspired confidence.

The events which followed the treaty between France and America are related in the work of which we offer a translation to our readers. We beg them to bear in mind that the historian of the United States proposed to write the history of the war of independence, in reference only to the events which concern the destiny of America, and her situation after 1776, relative to the powers of the Old World. It was not the task of Mr. Bancroft, and it is not ours to recount in detail the phases of that Five Years' War, during which the Indian seas, the coasts of Africa, and the Mediterranean, were theatres of numerous brilliant engagements, the honor of which was shared equally by the two chief actors, "the flag of the lilies, and that of the leopards." We borrow here the figurative language of our fathers, and we desire at the same time to render full justice to the generous sentiment which softened the horrors of war on both sides, and threw even upon the miseries which it inflicted on humanity a gleam of courtesy and chivalric honor. Devoted with the simplicity of filial love to the cause of their king, who stood to them for their country, the soldiers of both nations experienced during that long war nothing of those brutal enmities which produced atrocities, and which unhappily were revived when the war reopened in 1793. Fighting under different banners, devoted to the profession honored at that time above all others in the western world, these adversaries never spared each other on the battle-field; but their anger died with their battery fires, and they unhesitatingly trusted each other's honor when the fortune of war made them prisoners. The great ideas which had caused the war remained the only objects which, with few exceptions, both officers and soldiers had in view until the peace. The elevation of these motives gave nobleness to their actions, and stamped their language with the seal of dignity.

1746, he became the head of it in 1756, and resigned this great office in 1761. Five years later, he was banished from the theatre of his glory by accepting a peerage with the title of Earl of Chatham. Returning to public affairs in 1766, his ruined health, embittered temper, and overweening pride made him of no use, and he finally retired in 1768.

* William Pitt, second son of the first Lord Chatham, was born in 1759. In 1781, he entered the house of commons; in 1782, the cabinet, and in 1784 became head of the ministry. He died in 1806, worn out by hard work, and broken-hearted at the defeat of the coalition in Germany.

We must, however, remember that this spirit of generous courtesy showed itself much more in favor of the superior officers than towards subalterns, and that common soldiers gained very little from it. Delicacy of conduct lessened with the rank or grade of the actor. The condition of prisoners crowded into unhealthy enclosures, and often into floating prisons, is painted in the memoirs of the time with colors that to-day excite shame and remorse. Besides this general disposition of things, the American war was carried on with a tenacity which led on both sides to uncounted severities and lamentable excesses. In every civil war, the conflict of principles assumes a painful character of fanatical excitement; the practice of reprisals, indispensable perhaps, but always grievous, hardens hearts, and calls the executioner to do the work of the soldier. The employment of Indians as auxiliaries to the British troops was a sin against strategy, and a worse one against humanity. In adopting this cruel measure, the British generals had for excuse the usual practice of belligerents, French as well as English, in all former wars; but there was something peculiarly revolting in letting loose such enemies upon adversaries of the same blood, speaking the same language, and who only the day before were fellow-citizens. The dark side of the war was noticed and excessively blamed throughout Europe, and the remembrance of the atrocities committed a century ago on the Indian frontier, helps even in our time to keep alive in the American people bitter prejudices and unkind feelings towards Great Britain and its government.

Early in 1783, the peace of Versailles put an end to the warlike period of Louis XVI.'s reign, and placed the European powers in a new position, to be changed again in eight or nine years by the outbreak of the French Revolution. But the alarmingly rapid succession of events only removed the Old World farther and farther from the condition existing before the American war, a condition to which she could never return.

France came out unharmed in honor or territory: but she had acquired nothing new; and her public debt, very large for that time, absolutely demanded measures which the ancient *régime* could not carry out unless by reforms in finance and in other branches of administration so radical as to entirely change its nature.

Holland had suffered irreparable losses; and the contest between the aristocratic* republican party, and the stadholder, sustained by the confidence of the people, raged so violently that arms alone could decide it. William V. requested the intervention, not of England, but of Prussia, to maintain him in his position of royalty, which still in public acts preserved the name of republic. The successors of this prince, when party hatred had once subsided, gathered from this very situation advantages which, by confession of the whole nation, the country enjoys to-day.

* It was in fact the patriciates of the cities represented in the provincial and general assemblies of the states who formed a permanent and systematic opposition to the office of stadholder.

Prussia saw the monarch who had created her power close his career by a hard-earned peace, in which his last efforts had secured an advantage more solid than brilliant for the maintenance of the constitution of the empire. The Germanic Roman Empire was virtually divided into two confederations, with unsettled boundaries. The antagonism between the courts of Vienna and Berlin was as marked as ever, and was the most striking feature of German polities. The result of it was a sad series of internal quarrels and external defeats, although war was not formally declared between the two sovereignties till 1866, — the eightieth year after Frederic's death.

The ambition of Joseph II., no longer held in check by the tried wisdom of the great Maria Theresa (who died in November, 1780), turned towards Italy and the Turkish Empire. It threatened Venice, and the Danubian principalities Bosnia and Servia. This ambition, and the restless activity of a monarch eager for glory, ardent for the right, but unscrupulous and unskilful in gaining his ends, had decided Joseph II. to make a close alliance with Russia, although he could reasonably expect from so unequal an alliance only benefits entirely disproportionate to the sacrifices that he would demand of his state, whose revenues were small and finances in confusion.

Catherine II. without resorting to arms, had attained the lofty rank that she sought, when she proposed the league of neutral nations for the protection of their flags in time of war. Admitted among the Christian powers less than a century before, Russia obtained for the first time the consideration and credit which belong to the protectors of a cause just in itself and in harmony with the true principles of civilization. The Empress continued on the defensive towards Sweden, the old rival of Russia, and was in readiness to renew the systematic operations which should force the Ottoman power, driven to the south of the Danube and the Caucasus, to restore to European civilization the beautiful regions on the north of the Black Sea, and on the Sea of Azof.

The three years of war during which Madrid was the ally of France gave to Spain advantages quite out of proportion to the importance of the contingent she furnished in troops and ships. She regained Minorca, although dismantled,* and the Floridas, which the council of the Indies vainly flattered themselves would give them back their former naval supremacy in the Gulf of Mexico. Minorca, unnaturally separated from Spain, ought to have been restored. The Floridas were of no use to her. The fortress of Gibraltar had resisted all assaults, and the Spanish flag could not float over it, notwithstanding the enormous sacrifices made for that end. But this was not the essential point. By recognizing the political existence of a great, independent nation in the new world, Spain condemned herself to lose, sooner or later, the magnificent transatlantic domain, the sovereignty of which had been transmitted by the princes of Austria to the Bourbons.

* The fortress of Port Mahon was razed before making restoration to the Spaniards.

Warned by the patriotic sagacity of Count d'Aranda, Charles III. had, it is true, resolved to introduce judicious reforms in the administration of his possessions, which were so vast that, far from regularly occupying them, Spain could not even explore them thoroughly. But the king did not dare, and perhaps would have dared in vain, to touch seriously the scaffolding of the institutions which his predecessors had given to the West Indies, treated as great farms of Spain, rather than as dependencies of a crown careful for the interest of all its subjects. The spirit of the system established by Philip II. was not changed by the peace of 1783. But between New Mexico and the mouths of the Orinoco, between the Isthmus of Panama and the southern pampas of the valley of the La Plata, on both slopes of the great chain of the Cordilleras were the creoles, many millions of people proud of their race, and dissatisfied with privileges given only to Europeans by birth. These creoles of four great viceroyalties, and the prosperous country of Chili, listened readily to the voice of independent America, whose frontier, for hundreds of leagues, was that of Florida and Louisiana. It is true that the insurrection in thought did not become one in deed, until the paternal government had yielded to the reverses of the war of 1793, and the pacification of 1795, so disastrous for Spain. But what signify twenty-five years in the life of nations? After 1808, transatlantic Spain was lost to the mother-country as surely as American England was lost to Great Britain after the declaration of July 2, 1776.

The part which Spain took in the war of 1778 brought to light the faults in the social and political organization of that great, generous nation which, for a century and a half, had been the rival of France, and, in the western world, had threatened the balance of power, not less than religious and political liberty. The history of the Spanish monarchy presents the strange spectacle of germs of decay and of greatness side by side; of equal growth in power and in political faults; of outward success impoverishing internal resources; of decline visible to clear eyes at the very moment when the country was nearest to universal dominion. The monarchy, founded by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella—"the Catholic kings"—was, late in the fifteenth century, injured in population and industry by the impolitic and inhuman expulsion of a half million Jews, whose trade and manufactures enriched the country. The fruits of the conquest of Grenada were, in great measure, lost by the cruel treatment of the Moors,—recent subjects,—whose persecution, forced rebellion, and final expulsion ruined agriculture and destroyed industry in the eastern half of the kingdom. The civil liberties of Castile died by the pitiless hand of Charles V. This king might flatter himself that his own genius had done more for his nation than her former assemblies of proud spirits, active and devoted to the public welfare. But, under Philip II., and incomparably more under the nominal reign of his miserable successor, the most stupid despotism, unyielding in great things, fickle in small ones, laid its hand of lead on all branches of social life and production in the territories. A system of economy, opposed to sound reason, and clearly condemned by

experience, ended by exhausting the provinces, and hastening the decline of population, which emigration to America, on an immense scale, had already grievously diminished. Aragon had been deprived of her most important privileges by Philip II.; what remained were destroyed with inhuman severity by Philip V., at the end of the Spanish war of succession. Under an arbitrary and suspicious government, every thing was laid low in the countries which, by the division of the Spanish monarchy in 1713, passed to the Bourbons. This dynasty, undoubtedly, brought to the throne better sentiments and wiser intentions than the house of Austria, which ended with the unfortunate Charles II. But neither Philip V., early affected with disgust for royal duties; nor Ferdinand VI., devoured by black melancholy; nor even Charles III., although he was far superior to his brother and his father, could apply sufficiently powerful remedies to the chronic diseases which laid Spain waste. With lamentable folly, of which Spain does not offer the only example, the Castilians were in love with their faults, proud of the peculiar character which their vices gave them, and of the ruinous practices which were everywhere the inevitable consequence. The king, superior in many respects to his people, would sometimes assist his intelligent ministers, but he either would not or could not walk firmly in the way of necessary reforms, and he did nothing which his successor could not neglect or even destroy. Europe was astonished at the insignificant part which Spain played, as a mere auxiliary of France, in a war which flattered her pride, and ought to have satisfied her revenge,—a great war against England, who had no ally. But, in fact, Charles III. had done all that he could with his exhausted resources and the poverty of means at his disposal.

The separation of the Spanish colonies was soon followed by that of Brazil, so that Portugal, who had taken no part in the war of independence, nor seriously wavered in the friendship which common interests had formed between her and England, lost none the less the most important part of her colonial possessions, the largest and only lasting proof of Portuguese power beyond the ocean.

Finally England came out of the war, which had lasted nine years in America, with diminished territory, forced to recognize the French navy as a formidable rival, and burdened with a debt unequalled in the past or present. Great Britain was obliged to establish on a new basis commercial relations with nations that had hitherto submitted to all regulations which her parliament had seen fit to make. Yet among the British people, the change produced by the introduction of the United States into the great Christian republic heretofore limited to Europe, novel and important as it was, produced small disturbance and interfered little with future advancement. The pupil had rejected the authority of the teacher; but in their essential nature the two nations were alike. In general, English institutions were retained in the thirteen colonies; and the fathers of the American confederation had founded their new nation on the principles of English common law, according to the precedents of English history, by the inspiration of English thought, on the precepts of the law-givers and oracles of the English schools of

politics and law. The intellectual inheritance of Bacon and Locke, of Milton and Newton, of Cranmer and Knox, still more in a certain degree of William III. and Chatham, was a possession common to Great Britain and America.

In a few years the English nation and the government saw clearly that their remaining possessions in North America would, if managed wisely and left to the free growth of the colonizing spirit of the Saxon race, fully compensate for the loss of the old thirteen colonies. These prospective advantages have now been fully realized. Commerce with the United States, regulated by agreements freely discussed by both parties, brings to the British treasury infinitely larger sums than the old monopoly produced before the separation. Consequently, peace, once made, was on a sure foundation and favorable to the real interests of both nations. Washington was its sincere apostle and constant supporter. When the French Revolution had hurled into England that challenge of Hannibal, which was the signal for a bitter war of almost twenty-two years, Washington, then President of the United States, while preserving a real interest for France, and professing lasting gratitude for the assistance of Louis XVI., insisted so strongly on the duty and advantage of neutrality, that it was impossible for party suggestion or threat to make the American Union swerve from that policy which she had marked out for herself. She remained attached to it long after new men had succeeded Washington in the presidency, and in the direction of foreign affairs.

But the creation of an independent nation in America by the assistance, and, as the world believed, principally by the assistance, of France produced consequences in the French monarchy of much greater importance than the rest of Europe felt.

The political dogma of the sovereignty of the people had been proclaimed in America with calm solemnity, the fruit of the deep conviction of an intelligent and religious people. The grandson of Louis XIV., the descendant of Saint Louis, had boldly favored this doctrine, for which the philosophic school in France had, by its publications, for half a century been preparing the way.

Monarchy, accepted up to this time in English America, as it had been in all other European colonies, had given place to a republic; and social order had not suffered, and the regular growth of material prosperity had not received a sensible check.

Carried away by the characteristic vivacity of their nature; sharing the brilliant but dangerous gift which Providence has bestowed upon the French race, which seizes at a glance on general principles, and without reflection risks the universal application of them,—the ruling classes in French society were aglow with enthusiasm for the American system. They at once asked themselves if France should remain a mere looker-on at this new force.

Cool reason and a careful examination of the social and political conditions on both sides of the Atlantic would have left no doubt as to the answer of this question. The just and fit counsel of America to France would have been to make immediate and important reforms on which

wise men were already nearly in agreement: far from encouraging France in revolution, the example of America, properly understood, would have banished even the thought of it.

The traditions, manners, and hereditary beliefs of the different classes in France, the great fact of distinction of orders and of classes in each order, finally the nature of the French character (and the experience of the eighty following years confirms this opinion), in a word, the whole social fabric, already too much undermined to resist an assault, but still too firm to give way easily,—all evidently prevented the substitution at that time of a republic for a monarchy in France, without vast ruin and wretched excesses.

From the close of the reign of Louis XIV., the best minds and the great hearts of the eighteenth century had recognized the need of systematic reforms in all branches of the public service. But the plans adopted by the heir-presumptive to the crown, arranged by his loyal counsellors, and developed by the imagination rather than the reflection of an amiable and somewhat visionary* character, rested on the preservation of the fundamental institutions. The power of the king, according to the system upon which he acted, should in no way be lessened, but regulated in its application to the government of the people. The distinction of orders should be not only sustained, but strengthened by assigning to each its exact privileges and functions. Far from desiring to abolish advantages of birth, they sought to make them more honorable by preventing the dissipation of patrimonies, and attaching duties to every superior station. The plan of Vauban, to establish a "royal tithe," touched only a single privilege of the exemptions from taxation, henceforth condemned by all publicists, and very weakly defended even by the interested parties themselves.

At a time, then recent, when economists and contemplative philosophers, whom the public encouraged to take up the question of reforms, made plans which they flattered themselves would be put in practice, they assumed the hearty support of unlimited power in the monarch. They exhorted him to use his sovereign prerogative to abolish abuses, to rectify irregularities, to harmonize the different provincial laws, to restrain, and, if need were, suppress the privileges of orders and of corporations. It was on the supreme magistrate that these preachers of reform relied to improve the condition of his subjects. Far from wishing to take from the sovereign any of the powers which he then possessed, the innovators accredited by popular opinion desired to smooth the way before the steps of the head of the nation, and to make him a dictator with absolute legislative authority.

Parliaments, on their part, while constantly active in opposing the acts of the royal ministers, professed the most religious respect for the king's authority, "supreme and held from God alone." They would consent to reforms, even when they imperiously demanded great

* They were the Duc de Bourgogne, the Ducs de Beauvilliers and de Chevreuse, and Fénelon,—not when he wrote *Télémaque*, but when he gave serious advice to the new dauphin.

ones, only on condition that all acquired rights should be respected ; nothing was farther from their ideas than the plan of levelling all conditions, and transferring from the monarch to the multitude the direction of affairs, the thorny work of legislation.

The American school roughly turned aside the course of received opinions, introduced into the glowing and fickle imaginations of a witty rather than reflective generation foreign ideas, recommended by their novelty ; and thus to nullify the preparations made by a benevolent king, earnest counsellors, and sincere friends of the people, since the accession of Louis XVI., for a methodical reform in the government. History was abandoned for romance ; calm reflection, for fantastic enthusiasm. In avoiding beaten paths they hurried towards abysses ; but if such were (as we believe) the extreme consequences of the revolution in America, it is only just to repeat that the example of the Americans ought to have produced wholly different effects.

England, in consenting to an apparently disadvantageous peace, had shown the difficult and meritorious virtue of resignation, and afterwards gave proof of a wisdom very rare in aristocratic governments, by making use, in her internal affairs, of the lessons learned from American emancipation. She made these lessons bear fruit, by applying them with justice and careful adaptation to established interests in proportion to their real importance.

William Pitt, that minister great in the things given him to perform, greater still in the plans that he made but could not carry out on account of the violence of the times, — Pitt set himself resolutely at work as soon as peace was assured. In 1786, a treaty of navigation and commerce, negotiated with the Comte de Vergennes, another bold and clear-sighted statesman, established between England and France easy and liberal relations. Heretofore such had been considered opposed to the different interests of the two nations ; but it was found that in reality they brought about a harmony of feeling favorable to both nations, equally proud of their civilization and of their power. The theory of free trade, modified to suit the demands of interests which had legal guarantees, was put in practice in a way which ought at once to have made converts of intelligent people. Yet its triumph, after obstinate struggles with selfish advantages, deep-rooted prejudices, blind jealousies, and even the sophisms of science wrested from their true interpretation, did not begin for seventy-four years. Let us never despair of that which is in harmony with the true welfare of nations and with the principles of eternal justice.

The treaty of 1786 with France, and another on a like basis, just signed, with America, did not limit Pitt's views in the sphere of reform. The political emancipation of Irish Protestants, declared in 1782, should be followed, in the clearly stated opinion of the prime minister, at a proper time, by the social emancipation of Irish Catholics ; and the union of the Irish Parliament with that of Great Britain, consummated in 1801, was delayed instead of being hastened by the foolish and disloyal insurrection of 1798.

The minister of the crown could not yet get a vote for the suppres-

sion of the slave-trade,—that iniquity which Liverpool and other sea-board cities defended, because they found it a source of great profit. Pitt urged Wilberforce and Clarkson to propose it in the House of Commons, of which they were simple members. In the cabinet it was an open question. A superior duty forced Pitt to leave to his friends the trouble and the honor of gathering these immortal laurels. But he was never discouraged, and never grew cold in the support which he gave, with both voice and personal influence, to enable those good men to complete the long and difficult labor, which was drawing near its close when the son of Chatham “died, the victim of the noblest of sorrows.” The next year (1807), Fox, himself on the verge of the grave, succeeded in making that a law for the British Empire, which was already a law for humanity; and which, thanks to English persistency, soon became a law for the civilized world.*

Afterwards, successive reforms were made in the government of the still large colonial possessions remaining to England after the peace of 1783. We have spoken of the salutary change in the government of Canada. Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were united, greatly to the social and political advantage of both. At Jamaica and the other Antilles, the royal governors were assisted by representative assemblies. The Indian Empire had become, at this time, of immense importance, by its wars and its commerce; and the feeling of outraged humanity, of justice trampled under foot, broke out in England with a strength against which the avarice of private speculation, and the authority of bad precedents, could not long defend the extortionate practices and habitual violence of the early governors of the East India Company. Public indignation fell at first upon the guilty individuals; afterwards upon the institutions which permitted such malversation. On the whole, the impulse given to liberal ideas and human requirements by the American Revolution affected the mother country more powerfully and more widely than it did the colonies themselves, although the latter may justly be proud that they were the origin and occasion of them.

In France, the innovators and theorists made their assault with specious doctrines and reckless declamation, not defining their aim, or, if they touched it, rushing beyond it. The intentions of the monarch were upright, and his mind was truly just, although slow; but he had no strength of will. He lacked that cold and persistent resolution which alone lifts a reformatory prince above the mean opposition in which his court and numerous servants interested in preserving abuses entangle him as in a net, whose meshes one sharp word, one decided gesture, will break. Louis XVI. had not the character *to will*, as Alexander II. has done in our days, when, by peacefully changing the social constitution of the Russian Empire, the successor of Nicholas deserves the eternal gratitude of humanity. Unhappily, during the interval between the peace of Versailles and the opening of the States General (1783 to 1789), there was in France only one man whose will

* The slave-trade was abolished in 1817, by a solemn convention between all the Christian nations of Europe.

was indispensable to the safety of his country. That man was *the king*; the king, supreme legislator, source of all law,* last refuge of established institutions, heir of Henry IV. and of Louis XIV., heir also to his own misfortune and that of the world, of Louis XI. and Louis XV.; burdened by the faults of others, and by the accumulation of historical precedents, with a formidable responsibility that he could not throw off, and had not the strength to bear. When, in popular opinion, the third estate, which falsely called itself *the people*, claimed to be not only something but every thing † in the country, it was found that, on the other side, in actual legislation, in administration, in that which France had in place of a constitution, it was the king who represented every thing. To save the nation in this terrible dilemma, there was needed extraordinary genius, a Henry IV. and a Richelieu combined; but in Louis XVI. Providence had given France only a virtuous sovereign, crushed by the greatness of his part and the difficulties of his position.

We must especially consider here the part taken in preparation for the French Revolution, and in the first acts of that terrible tragedy, by the men who had shared in the American campaigns, and who naturally carried back to the old world the ideas which were triumphant in the new.

At first their number was small. A single army corps had been landed on the American continent to fight under Washington. The French flag was illustrious by victories, and honorable even in reverses, on all the seas of the world; but, above all others, this war had been for the French navy a renewal of the century's struggle with the English. Lafayette, when he dared to forestall the decision of his government to assist America, was accompanied by a very small number of young gentlemen, whose names, with few exceptions, are written in the history we have just read. The only one of the Polish volunteers who returned to his own country and played an important part there was the hero of Lithuania, Thaddeus Kosciusko. Next to M. de Rochambeau and M. de Lafayette, whose positions during the war were exceptional, was the Marquis de Chastellux,‡ whose chief honor is to

* *Caput legis*, head of the law.

† This watch-word of war and revolution, raised by Siéyès, contained, in the view of calm reason enlightened by history, the veriest absurdity and the most flagrant wrong. In consequence of imagining itself, in 1789, the *sole* ruler of a nation, where two other orders had historic and legal rights, the Third Estate was reduced, ten years later, to subjection to an absolute monarch. The state of mind at the beginning of the Revolution is clearly shown by the immense sensation this saying produced; the excited or stupefied multitude believed it a sort of decree proclaimed by eternal justice and by common sense.

‡ The Marquis de Chastellux, an avowed but very moderate friend of the philosophic school, was a general officer in the French auxiliary corps of the American army. His *Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, made and described after the war, added to the literary reputation of M. de Chastellux; their publication was completed in 1782. The author did not witness the Revolution. He died in 1788, the year in which France lost Buffon and vainly sought for a worthy successor to Vergennes, dead some months before.

have made illustrious by his writings the cause that he served with his sword. Many of the officers who were Washington's companions in arms were forced into retirement, by age or wounds, at the outbreak of the French Revolution. They all, however, whether in the ranks of the army or scattered at their own firesides, formed an American school, without official character, without formal organization,* but important on account of its influence upon the public mind. This school was not ignorant of the direction which public opinion took after the installation of the Constituent Assembly, when that body took possession of the sovereign power, almost immediately after the convection of the States General in 1789.

Until the explosion in France of a revolution which attacked, not like that in America, a foreign rule, but the royal prerogative itself and the vital institutions of the country, the officers returned from the war of Independence had shown themselves, almost without exception, open friends of the reforms which the king, on his side, was determined to carry out in good faith in all branches of public administration. The soldiers who thought and spoke thus, highly esteemed in the army and in the nation, had the calm and happy conviction that they had fulfilled all their duties, and had been faithful to their family traditions and the obligations of their station,

Indeed, the French nobility, especially the military nobility, which served at its own expense and saw the court only on rare occasions, had been, from the middle of the seventeenth century, devoted heart and soul to the crown, but not at all servile to royalty. While sacrificing its vital interests, it preserved the sentiment of hereditary dignity. The way in which its enemies in the other classes of the empire opposed it, and set their hearts upon despoiling it, showed plainly that an involuntary respect accompanied, in popular feeling, the envy and hatred which the misunderstood teachings of the philosophie school had aroused in most of the provinces against the "second of the privileged orders." On the eve of the Revolution, the gentlemen could be reproached for no such feeling. Unquestionably they were generally averse to an entire levelling of the nation, and they desired the continuance of the distinction between the orders; but they entered more ardently than the others into all the projected measures for the relief of misery, the extension of popular education, the amelioration of the criminal laws, the abolition of all abuses which put tyranny in the place of law. On all these matters, they were in free and affectionate interchange of thoughts and wishes with their former brothers-in-arms in America. Patriotism was a passion they all felt sincerely and professed eloquently. An illustrious writer † of established authority in the history of ancient France has observed, that the sentiment of the collective *nationality* of the nations from which the French monarchy has been gradually formed first appeared in the order of the nobility, where it

* The Society of the Cincinnati was only a short-lived association, without stability in Europe.

† Augustin Thierry, *Histoire du Tiers État*.

soon became paramount ; and for the obligations imposed by this sweet, strong passion, gentlemen were lavish of their blood and their treasure, even when the king, whom they looked upon as the natural head of their order, was personally unworthy of such sacrifice. This devotion to the king continued in 1789 ; but, after the reign of Louis XV., and especially after the American war, another sentiment claimed a large share in the feelings of the nobility,—that of their own dignity, revived by the remembrance of the time preceding the rule of Louis XIV., and of their duties to other classes and to humanity in general. Such feelings would have brought forth valuable results, morally and politically, if the fierce irruption of material violence, of impracticable systems, of angry declamation, of every thing that belongs to the madness of unrestrained passion, and thought swept beyond the limits of experience,—if the Revolution, in one word, had not driven back all inclination to kindness and conciliation in such a manner that men became implacable foes, who would on both sides have gained infinitely by remaining allies in the service of the national cause.

After 1789, and especially after the crimes against the dignity and the person of the monarch in 1791 and 1792, when the military nobility was forced to decide on its course of action, under circumstances for which there was no precedent in the memory of man, the survivors of the American war divided into two parties, each officer following his own impulses. Some believed their swords, their fortunes, and their blood belonged to the supreme head of the army, to the first gentleman in the kingdom ; they marched into foreign lands to undertake there the defence of the late institutions of their own country.

Others believed that their first duty was to their native soil ; there they would defend, under new colors, the institutions which the body of the people had accepted, and which their makers believed to be models from antiquity, or copies of the American Republic. Let us be just in offering respect, without invidious distinction, to the memory of those brave antagonists. They all thought they obeyed the command of duty ; most of them sacrificed for that all their private interests. They had conscientiously answered in different ways a tremendous question, on which eternal justice had given no verdict, unless we consider as such the judgments pronounced by Fortune. And how various even these have been ! Let us cease, let us cease, from condemnation and recrimination ! The study of this age, so full of tragic incidents, ought, apart from the higher considerations to which we have alluded, to touch our hearts with respectful pity for the actors in those terrible scenes.

In the army which followed the flag of the republican assemblies, Rochambeau* and D'Estaing † fought with sad but unshaken fidelity. Their reward was, for the first, exile ; for the second, the scaffold.

* M. de Rochambeau was the last Marshal of France created by Louis XVI. in 1791. The following year, finding the troops disobedient, and disgusted by the atrocities committed at Paris, he resigned the command of the army of the north. He escaped the scaffold by flight, and died in the obscurity of exile in 1807.

† Admiral d'Estaing received, in 1790, the command of the national guard

Lafayette's fate was exceptional, like his character and the first acts of his public life. When the form of government was changed, a prominent position was ready for him. In 1789, he became the idol of the people, who imagined that they saw in him the genius of free America crossing the ocean to deliver the Old World. Having done more than any other person to introduce a parliamentary constitution in which royalty should keep its place, but not its power, Lafayette tried to oppose one last barrier to the overflow of demagogism; but he had only his sword and the remnant of his popularity. His sword was broken by his own soldiers; his prestige was lost in the city, where the destinies of France were decided. Forced not only to pass almost alone into the camp of his enemies, but also to ask their chiefs for protection for his life, he was deceived in this last trust, and the only asylum he found was a prison. His captivity, as unjust as it was long, kept him from taking any part in the political or military events of the Reign of Terror and the administration of the Directory. The rest of his career does not come within the plan of our work. We only add, that the character of Lafayette was formed, and his principles acquired unchangeable firmness, while he served in America by the side of Washington. When he returned to his own country, he constantly refused to take any part in the acts of a power that departed more and more widely from the forms and spirit of republican institutions. He yielded neither to the advances nor the displeasure of Napoleon. The former prisoner of Olmütz, become the hermit of La Grange, remained a mere spectator of the great events which, between the battle of Marengo and the first capitulation of Paris, threw Europe into confusion many times, and gave to France experience of successes and defeats alike unique in history.

The restoration reopened a political career to him. He gradually regained public favor, and was made, for a day only, in 1830, the arbiter of the fate of the monarchy, which was shaken and tending to a change which would give it no solidity. Lafayette lived long enough to see in America, where he received a welcome both cordial and stately, its power become gigantic and firm by the union of its members. America generously rewarded the services given to her in her early need. Death spared Lafayette to an advanced age, and he never lost faith in the beliefs or even the illusions by which he had lived.*

Many officers who had served under Rochambeau in America were in the army which followed the royal princes to the banks of the Rhine, and which, through the cruel sufferings of nine consecutive campaigns, faithfully defended the colors of ancient France, and the senti-

at Versailles. His services, and the sincerity of his devotion to the cause which he embraced, could not save him from the proscription which levelled all noble heads. He was guillotined in 1794, at the age of 74.

* M. de Lafayette was called to the Council of the Notables by the choice of the king in 1787. We know the part which fell to him in the Constituent Assembly. He lived till 1834, preceding to the tomb by two years the king Charles X., who was born a few months before in 1757.

ment of "unconquerable love" * for its native land. Among them was the Chevalier Durand, who commanded the batteries at the siege of Yorktown, who pressed the hand of Washington after that decisive victory, who remained by the side of Admiral de Grasse, one of the few survivors of the disaster to the fleet of the Antilles, and who, nine years later, had the unique distinction of raising and commanding a regiment of his own name in the French emigrant army.

Returned to their homes after the First Consul had re-established order in France, these exiles, poor and out of employment, were nevertheless treated with respectful consideration by the government of Napoleon. These old officers, so long as they lived, kept a knowledge of and taste for political liberty, which they sincerely believed to be compatible with the royal prerogative in a limited monarchy. Such had, indeed, been the cardinal doctrine in the political *credo* of old France since the establishments of Saint Louis.

At the very time when the French Revolution began in Paris, North America inaugurated the Constitution,† which, until 1861, was both the basis of its federal government and the safeguard of the rights maintained by each State with inflexible determination.

Warmly sympathizing with the movement opening under such charming auspices, and draped with the splendid colors of hope, Young America applauded her former ally, who seemed to be following her example. Washington was President of the Union, and still had almost unlimited influence over the feelings of a grateful nation. The clear-sightedness of this great citizen did not then fail. With affectionate anxiety, he urged his former companions-in-arms and their political friends to be moderate in action, and to preserve for the august head of the "constitutional king" the respect due to his rank, the gratitude due to the sacrifices he had made without hesitation.

One of the most enlightened of American statesmen, Gouverneur Morris, was sent to represent his country at the new government of France, and to recall, when occasion offered, the wise counsels of Washington to the leaders of the parties into whose hands the reality of power had passed in Paris. The journal of Morris and contemporary witnesses show how admirably he understood his mission, and that he neglected no means to stop the Revolution in that unbridled course through blood and all forms of delirium, which dragged France to the inevitable end, — the eclipse of liberty.

When the Convention declared war against Great Britain, the agents sent successively to America by that Assembly under which France had been incessantly tossed between tyranny and anarchy did their utmost to draw the United States into a deadly struggle with the English. But their efforts were useless before Washington's resolution to keep his country at peace. So, while the hero of Independence, the founder

* "Amour indompté;" the beautiful expression of the poet of Cinque Maggio.

† Accepted by the different States in succession, the Constitution went into operation March 4, 1789.

of the Union, lived, America remained firm in the neutrality which was both her duty and her interest. The most violent provocations, the spoliation of which her merchant-ships became the victims in punishment for her refusal, the declamations of leading demagogues, jealous of the glory of Washington and eager to gain his heritage, could not change in the least that pacific policy which the second President, John Adams, had the honor of faithfully carrying out.

Thus all thoughtful observers clearly see the difference between the spirit of the American Revolution in 1776 and the French in 1789. The first did only what was necessary to insure to the people of the United States its independent existence and self-government. It undertook no changes in the social order excepting by successive and prudent modifications of the civil code. The privileges which were abolished had no right to exist, and made no resistance; there was no distinction of orders anywhere, and in most of the provinces they had never existed. The continuity of time was not broken; the memories of the past, even those of the war in which the colonies assisted the mother-country from 1755 to 1763 (dates then very recent), were held with affectionate respect and pride, which, in the old families, were not at all opposed to equality before the law. How much better would the fate of France have been, if, instead of eulogizing the institutions of America, she had studied them! How many precious resources the country would have saved! How many foolish attempts she would have avoided! With what safety and comparative ease the really useful and just results of the Revolution would have been obtained, without being bought by iniquity, dishonored by crimes, and always compromised by the spirit of blind innovation, chimerical levelling, political irritation, and incorrigible imprudence, from which France has suffered so much!

By the treaty of Basel, in 1795, France recovered Louisiana; so that, for eight years, the colonial territory of the French Republic bordered on the new and flourishing States which had been formed between the Mississippi and the Alleghany Mountains.* From this recovery, the importance of which she did not appreciate, France gained no more advantage than Spain had done during the thirty years that she owned Louisiana.†

But the First Consul, at war with Great Britain, and determined not to lay down his arms until he had destroyed that adversary against whom his fortune was destined to be shattered, wished, by the sacrifice of a magnificent property (the value of which he probably did not know), to free himself from the care of defending it against the masters of Jamaica, the rulers of the ocean. On the other hand, he thought that, by selling Louisiana to the United States, he should strengthen

* These States—at that time Territories, but afterwards admitted to the Union with the same rights as the older States—are Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

† It was not till 1765 that Spain decided to take actual possession of New Orleans and its dependencies, although the formal cession by France had been announced two years before.

with that nation the bonds of friendship, loosened by the brutalities of the preceding *régimes*; that he should eventually find in her an ally against England; and that it was better for France to have in America a powerful friend rather than an unimportant colony. Finally, he was fully sensible of the pecuniary advantage of the transaction, for he had fixed the price at eighty million francs. The United States were no longer poor; the finances of France were painfully reviving from the total ruin into which they had been thrown by the madness of the Convention, and by the incapacity, as much as the immorality, of the Directory. The negotiation was conducted openly and rapidly between the American commissioners appointed by Thomas Jefferson, President of the American Republic since 1801, and the delegates of the First Consul. Of these, M. Barbé de Marbois* was the head. A statesman, a skilful financier, a sincere friend of humanity, and loyally devoted to the service of his country, Marbois understood the full importance of this transaction: and he spoke of it in his memoirs with an earnestness and emotion that do honor to his judgment and his heart.

So Louisiana, after sharing again for eight years the destinies of France, to whom she owed her settlement in 1718, became a member of the American Union, to remain there for ever. The territory of which President Jefferson took possession in the name of Congress, without opposition from Great Britain or Spain, had no definite boundary on the north-west. But it formally comprised the region from which, at different times, the States and Territories of Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, and the great Indian reserve were made. Its possession opened to American colonization a way to the summit of the Rocky Mountains, and gave it a fair claim (which it afterward put forward) to the whole valley of the Oregon, the principal affluent of the Pacific Ocean.† We may say, without exaggeration, that the peaceful acquisition of Louisiana, by doubling the territory of the American Union, by the annexation of the whole valley of the Father of Waters, raised it, not at once, but in a short time, to rank with the great powers of the world, and assured to it pre-eminence in the western hemisphere. This new and immense obligation to France was appreciated with sincere gratitude by the United States; nevertheless they persevered for nine years in the neutrality favorable to their commerce, and apparently necessary in the weak condition of their navy.

The cession of Louisiana by France to the Anglo-Americans was a disaster to Spain. It exposed the whole Mexican frontier to the ardent and unscrupulous action of a race which increased with great rapidity, and put no bounds to its greed of territorial possession. Florida, after

* François Barbé de Marbois, born in 1745, had, before the Revolution, filled consular and diplomatic positions in America: President of the Council of Ancients in 1797, struck by the *coup d'état* of the 18th of August, escaping almost by miracle from his pestilential prison at Sennamary, he was appointed by the First Consul Minister of Finance. His honorable life was prolonged till 1837.

† This is the river *Bourbon* of our transactions in the last century.

the cession of New Orleans to the United States, became the limit (at least on the land side) of the great Anglo-Saxon republic, and the Sabine River was only a slight protection for Texas. At the beginning of the present century, it was easy to foresee with certainty the time when these beautiful and fertile provinces would change masters. Florida was occupied in 1817, and two years later the government of Ferdinand VII., exhausted by its vain efforts to reconquer the rebel colonies in Spanish America, ceded the two provinces to the United States. From the Mexican Republic, weak heir of the Spanish power north of the isthmus, the American Union won Texas, at the price of a war which gave to the United States all the northern part of the old vice-royalty of New Spain. Under General Scott the American eagle flew to the lakes of Mexico, and returned only to fasten her talons for ever in the valley of the River del Norte, the northern Cordilleras, and California, richer than any other portion of the New World in minerals and products of the earth.

In the acquisition of New Orleans lay the germ of San Francisco, that rival of New York in the bewildering rapidity of its growth and the almost limitless expansion of its commercial relations.

The French ambassador had at least a partial view of such a future, when, on April 30, 1803, he signed the treaty which transferred to the American Union a region larger than France, Italy, and Germany united. The words of M. Barbé de Marbois on that solemn occasion, to which we have already alluded, were serious and prophetic. It was part of the policy of the United States, still modest in language and full of respect for the older powers, to make little noise about this magnificent acquisition, and to organize slowly the territory of which it had gained possession.

Indeed, it was six months before the President received from Congress authority to take formal possession of the territory ceded by France to the United States. The following year, by a second act of Congress, Louisiana was divided into two districts, under the control of the executive, and with only territorial privileges. At last, on April 8, 1811, the "Territory of Orleans" was admitted to the Union as the seventeenth State, with the double character of sovereignty in its internal affairs and representation in the two houses of Congress. The successive formation of the other States and Territories made from the old province of Louisiana does not belong to our subject.

When the First Consul of the French Republic ceded Louisiana to the United States, George Washington had been dead four years. He was followed to the grave by the sorrow and blessings of a whole nation, intelligent enough to understand the virtues of a citizen whose equal in his own country the ages have not produced. Washington, at the age of sixty-five, and at the close of his second presidential term, positively refused to accept a third; and, by this wise abnegation, he established a constitutional precedent from which the United States has not yet turned aside. Casting over the future of the Union which he had done so much to make, and succeeded so perfectly in strengthening, a glance saddened by the justice of his foresight, but consoled

by an unwavering faith in Divine Providence,—Washington desired to bequeath to his country the last counsels of his devotion and the treasure of his experience. He wrote them in a paper which will be as immortal as the memory of his own greatness: “A Farewell Address to the People of the United States,” dated Sept. 17, 1796. We may affirm, with the certainty of an historical demonstration, that all the prosperity of the American Union is due to the faithful following of the precepts of its founder, and all the calamities which have overtaken this republic have been caused by the forgetfulness or the systematic violation of the doctrines stated so strongly and so modestly by Washington.

Benjamin Franklin died a few months after Washington.* John Adams, the immediate successor of the hero in war and in peace, had honestly tried to carry out his political system. But when the treaty, ranking next in importance to that of Versailles (Sept. 3, 1783), was signed at Paris by the plenipotentiaries of France and of America, the presidential chair had been for two years occupied by Thomas Jefferson. This honor seemed rightfully to belong to the bold and able author of the Declaration of Independence. Yet the spirit in which Washington had filled his high office, governing impartially all discordant interests, and restraining by his personal dignity, as much as by the memory of his acts, all selfish passions,—this calm and moderate spirit no longer controlled American affairs. Jefferson was raised by the opposition to the highest office; and, during the eight years of his presideney, he experienced and bitterly felt the difficulties heaped up in his path by the very means he had used to open it for himself. Jefferson, however, lives in American history, a figure allied to antiquity by the breadth of his talents and the strength of his character. He had the glory of giving his name to the largest acquisition that any nation ever made by diplomacy, and that gave it an unparalleled advantage in history, without the cost of a single drop of blood. The period of the *alliance between France and the United States* was worthily completed by this great event, which renders the memory of Jefferson † for ever dear to America.

At the time when our narrative closes, the United States had reached the most enviable condition for a political community; the vigor of youth, the fulness of hope, moderation in opinions, respect for justice and for acquired rights (at least in all that concerned white men), characterized the external and internal actions of this nation. Rapid and

* This is a mistake. Franklin died April 17, 1790; Washington died Dec. 14, 1799. — [TRANSLATOR.]

† Thomas Jefferson, born April 2, 1743, belonged, like George Washington, to the old cavaliers, the colonizers of Eastern Virginia. His family had the honorable distinction from generation to generation of giving friendship and, as far as possible, protection to the Indians. Chosen President (the third in the order of time) of the United States in 1801, and re-elected for a second term in 1805, he lived till the close of 1826, and took part in the fiftieth anniversary of the Independence, the principles of which he had formulated, and the audacity of which he justified in a well-considered and solemn appeal to the conscience of humanity.

continuous expansion, wisely regulated, added each year myriads of citizens to the nation and vast districts to cultivation ; riches increased without sensibly changing the antique frugality of manners. The Union had, without danger, reduced its regular army to a very few regiments ; for the militia, ready at the first call, were sufficient for the safety of the frontiers, and the moral arm of the law had unquestioned authority in society. Another blessing had been granted to the American people in the gradual extinction of the hatred, formerly so bitter, between the conquered loyalists and the independents, absolute masters of the country.

The unmerciful laws against the defenders of the ancient rule, which explain without wholly justifying the exasperation caused by the civil war and the calamities endured by the provinces where it raged, were generally eluded or greatly softened in their execution. The confiscated property was restored or bought at a low price by the relatives of the exiles, who returned it to the former owners. Family ties, roughly broken by the opposition of principles, were soon renewed, and former enemies concluded marriages between their children. One of the most striking examples of these happy reconciliations attracted the attention of travellers who lately visited Boston, in the library of William H. Prescott, one of the most honored sanctuaries of American literature. There they saw crossed in fraternal repose the swords worn by the ancestors of the historian, Colonel Prescott of Pepperell and Captain John Linzee of the royal British navy, who both fought in the heroic duel of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775.*

How instructive is the startling contrast presented by France and the United States in 1789 ! France selected from the examples which America offered her precisely and exclusively those which suited neither her political nor social organization. To all others she obstinately shut her eyes. The great American school had deteriorated so in those few years, that when Lafayette — who truly represented it, and whose popularity, after the Assembly of the Notables, had eclipsed that of the other authors of new ideas — went to perform the most honorable action of his life before the bar of the Legislative Assembly, after the crime of the 20th of June, his just and noble request was rejected with brutal scorn. When, a few days later, he rejoined the outposts of the army which had been placed under his command, in face of the emperor's troops, the only resource left him, in order to save the Revolution from

* This "unique trophy," as it is called by the Reverend Mr. Frothingham, author of a noble poem, has been removed to the rooms of the Mass. Historical Society. It is sad to read, in the correspondence of the ministers of Louis XVI., in 1782, the expressions of scorn and anger towards the American loyalists. In their praiseworthy desire to take the shortest possible road to peace, M. de Vergennes and his colleagues were very impatient when the English ministers, better judges under the circumstances of what honor and humanity demanded, insisted for a long time on the duty of England to obtain complete amnesty for American loyalists. Ten years later, the followers of the King of France had a cruel experience like that of the men whom they so harshly cast out of the treaty.

what would have been one of its most revolting crimes, was to give himself up * to his enemies and the cabinet of Vienna, who, on this occasion, were heedless of the voice of justice and the counsels of generosity. If he had remained in Paris, Lafayette would perhaps have shared the fate, "glorious and beautiful, but cruel above all others," of his companion-in-arms in the war of American Independence, the Baron de Viomesnil, killed on August 10 before the last rampart of constitutional royalty.†

May new generations, at least, profit by such lessons, which history, in her majestic impartiality, offers to all nations! At the present time, few studies would be more instructive, or of more direct application to the conduct of political affairs on both sides of the ocean, than that of the principles by which the American Revolution was begun, continued, and ended; and the examination of the consequences it had for the principal ally of the United States.

There is still time to learn from what was the heroic age of the New World lessons of moderation in reform, of freedom in opinion, of respectful regard for all that law has held sacred through a long series of years. The gigantic Republic of the West, recently rent by a civil war, whose calamities the old spirit of moderation and of mutual concessions to the common good would perhaps have turned aside,—this Union, re-established by force of arms, stirred by the passions of hatred and revenge; yielding, also, sometimes to the temptations continually born from great wealth and unbalanced strength,—cannot go back too affectionately or with too much docility to the examples given by the actions and by the words of the illustrious men and the obscure heroes, who, in deliberative assemblies and on fields of battle, accomplished the work to which are for ever gloriously attached the immortal names of Adams, Jefferson, Greene, Lafayette, Rochambeau, and, first of all in arms and in administration, GEORGE WASHINGTON.

* Aug. 20, 1792.

† Charles du Houx, Baron de Viomesnil, born in 1723, lieutenant-general of the army.

FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES.

HISTORICAL REVIEW,

BY THE

COUNT ADOLPHE DE CIRCUKT,

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